

THINKING
STRAIGHT
ON
MODERN
ART



HENRY R. POORE

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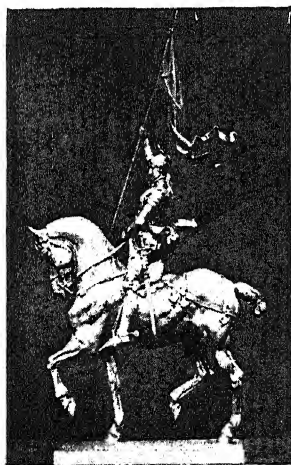
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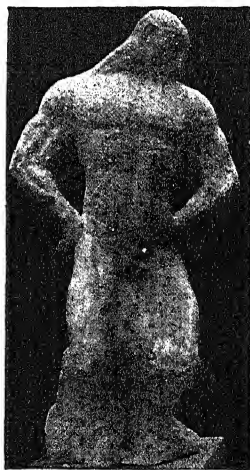
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RETROSPECTION

THINKING STRAIGHT ON MODERN ART

By

HENRY RANKIN POORE

SOCIETY ARTS AND LETTERS, PARIS
NATIONAL ACADEMY, NEW YORK

*Author of "Pictorial Composition," "The Conception
of Art," "Art Principles in Practice,"
"Modern Art Why, What
and How."*



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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To

MRS. ANNE F. HASTINGS

IN APPRECIATION OF A SISTER'S
DEVOTION TO AN ARTIST BROTHER

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE present volume is a condensation from "Modern Art; Why, What and How" and "The Conception of Art."

It contains the arguments, pro and con, concerning Modern Art, omitting chapters from these books on the personnel of the new movement.

The Foreword is a summation of the entire question, with an insistent recommendation to the reader that a complete severation be made between Modern, and Ultra-Modern Art.

FOREWORD

"Says a good many things and says them straight."—EDWARD ALDEN JEWELL, reviewing in the *New York Times*, "Modern Art; Why, What and How," by Henry Rankin Poore.

THINKING STRAIGHT ON MODERN ART

THE chief reason why thinking concerning Modern Art should be as straight as possible is because nowhere in the history of civilization's progress can be found a subject more casual as to its conceptions, more perplexed in its ramifications from those conceptions or more devious in the ways of its propaganda than what is now rated as Ultra Modern Art.

Although human nature may weakly resent being mystified it as weakly permits it out of a native curiosity to know to what extent it may be either victimized or entertained. It is lenient in that permission out of an intuitive sympathy with any agency that can successfully perform. Barnum established this thesis years ago and it is still workable. We are willing to listen to the clown and court jester since so often veritable words of wisdom are forthcoming.¹

Modern art has largely established itself under these conditions, and while we may smile at its follies we may find entertainment and profit in what its later day is at length producing.

¹ "As to charlatanism, everybody uses it in Paris. It is approved; it is accepted; it is current coin."—EUGENE SCRIBE, critic.

When Matisse rolled over one morning and lay in a semi-somnolent mood gazing at the ceiling and wondering what size canvas he would order for his next "*machine*" at the Salon, a brilliant idea flashed through the mist: why a competition in *size*, why a *broadside*, when perhaps a bomb would prove quite as awakening! After all, what the Parisians wanted was a jolt, a sensation. Whereas art had become complex, why not start all over again and view her from the beginning, why not try the innocent eye! He arose and after coffee and a roll produced a picture in twenty minutes which showed all the qualities of the needed bomb,—it was indeed the product of the "innocent eye."

The avalanche heretofore threatened, was finally started: the loosening of these few pebbles was sufficient, the top soil gave way and suddenly to the minds of certain arbiters of opinion the fair fields of art were buried beneath the top soil. They could see nothing else. Where Classic, Renaissance and Romantic art had flourished crosses were erected marking the spot, bearing the simple inscription "Old Hat." An opportunity had arisen to the erstwhile press agents of art who from being mere chroniclers of what was doing, had transposed them over night into the eminent positions of prophets, priests, seers and leaders, opening the way to something entirely new for a world ever craving another novelty.

Behold the entry then of the art editor as the most consequential and impellent force in art. In his hands were entrusted the machinery and its transmittal power

to create opinion, to make or break at will. To the management of both journal and magazine the arrangement was eminently agreeable. The first demand of the press for "newness" was sufficiently and completely supplied.

Hence, it thenceforth becomes a duty for any chronicler of facts concerning the art of the twentieth century to state as fairly and frankly as possible the result of the transference of public *art teaching* to the hands of exploiters of Art's changing view-points, to whom no obligation seemed apparent to preserve Art's inherited integrity through a steadfast hold upon the great achievements of its wonderful past, accomplished largely through a complete ignoring of the methods now advocated by the "newer thought."

Now let it be as frankly said that any editor who failed to see the news value of such an opportunity was not worth his salt as an editor charged with the responsibility of entertaining his public. Albeit there remain a few who believe that an ideal is worth more than a sensation.

One may balk at the statement, alas too true, that for the great public at large the teachers of art for the past twenty years have been the art writers for the press, but a smile must follow in realizing that the *Art Directors* of the country are the proprietors of these publications. "Talk up the new things boys; talk 'em up."

Little else has been talked up since the newness began. The sudden silences concerning anything else has left

the "constant reader" with the impression that there wasn't anything else.

The reviews of the annual Academy exhibitions were of less importance, as to space, than a declaration of freedom by another "unknown." The fact that the great preponderance of art activity throughout the country has been consistently in line with the Classic or Renaissance development of the art problem has had little or no weight with the news promoters of the subject.

The misfortune which has followed upon this wholesale absorption of Modernism is that there has been little or no distinction between *true and worthy* Modernism and the fantastic and puerile expressions of arrested mentality mistaken for genius.

In a word then, what is this difference between the old versus the new "school" of art?

First let us settle the all important question—What is Art? *Art is the expression of the essential character of a subject, appealing to man's æsthetic and intellectual pleasure.*¹ If any one can give a better definition let us have it. The man for whom art is created is eternally looking for an expression of this essential character in any of the arts which engages his attention. If the novelist does not give it he closes the book or keeps on in a vain hope it may eventually be revealed. If the essayist or orator fails him he finishes with a reproach at having given so much time to vaporous reasoning or inept controversy. In music it is less easily defined, but is eagerly sought in architecture where exists its most varied possibilities. The reveal-

¹ See Appendix III, p. 123.

ing of essential character is not only the keynote, it is the chief test of all reasons, for Art.

Without dwelling on what might be expanded into a mighty essay on the most important of any of the issues concerning the subject, let the reader get his foot on this fact as a foundation and continue with the argument.

I ask the direct question why the purveyors of the new viewpoint of art should assume the right-of-way in subsidizing practically the whole press and platform under the claim that what they have to proclaim is new, and in all too many cases take the advantage of strengthening the new case as against the old by decrying the standing of the latter.

When this is attempted they unwittingly draw aside the curtain and display a solid phalanx in protestation, stretching from Egyptian and Assyrian art through the Greek period, the Renaissance and the Romantic, covering the great accomplishments of art of the ages, for all of this is absolutely and undeniably opposed to the distortionate conception of the creative efforts of this latter day of Ultra-Modernism.

To both "Art Director" and "Faculty," the solicitude concerning the great lay membership of their art school has been only to see that something else should be substituted for what had been.¹

¹ Let me here temper what may seem censorious, with the admission that much of the onesided consideration of art by the press is inevitable under the circumstances. The critics for the daily journals are necessarily news writers, and a just rejoinder to criticism would be "We write what is wanted."

As an art writer for many years on an important daily, the au-

Now let the reader imagine, without too great a tax upon his natural demand for possibilities, that there were no purveyors of art news; that persons interested in art were advised through the press to see certain exhibitions as they passed during an art season; that the catalog of each of these exhibitions bore the remonitory slogan "Art is the expression of the essential character of a subject," and that there were no docents or salesmen to *explain* things.

On such a basis the writer will risk the assertion that the average intelligent layman would pick a better selection for both purchase and prizes than a committee of artists. There are several reasons for this. On the assumption that the layman be a well educated man he will have had the basis of an art education laid in his study of Rhetoric, for every known principle in the construction of pictorial or statuesque art finds its counterpart in literary construction, a fact fully elaborated in "Art Principles in Practice," by the author.

Again, under the assumption of a broad education, the layman will find a pleasure in noting a pleasing variety in the manner in which "essential character" has been interpreted. The average layman is not concerned

thor well knows that we are merely mates on the ship and that the captain runs the craft.

The appeal herewith therefore is not to those who are content to merely do "what is wanted" by the captain; but to those who, realizing the enormous opportunity of their position are willing to aid in the upbuilding of a national art into a world power such as Europe has already conceded to us. (See "What Europe Thinks of American Art"; opinions of artists and critics of seven European nationalities, published by the National Arts Club, New York, now republished in the Appendix.)

with schools or fads; the *what*, perhaps unduly, has precedence over the *how* and while allowing that the "how" may be rated as the keen edge of art, the "what" is the blade which makes the edge possible and gives it point. In time the layman becomes more and more insistent that the edge be kept sharp. He unwittingly acknowledges that the "way" of saying a thing is what largely affects his interest in it.

By comparison the artist takes his subject as merely the foundation, the reason for stating his conclusions in his own way. Technique to him is the larger end of the proposition. Little need arises for proof of this than to note what today obtains before press and juries as representative of the modern viewpoint.

It is an age-long controversy, a contention between two eminent thinkers of antiquity; Plato who felt a right, nay an obligation of the mind to control nature in art, declaring the soul of the thing should dominate the outer resemblance, and Aristotle who as vehemently asserted that the soul or essence of the thing was *dependent* upon the form or outer expression, following closely the lead of nature.

The change which Plato felt to be desirable concerning its form, was a change *upward* toward idealization. It never occurred to him to caution against a counter stroke. It required the mentality of a modern world to see to this.

Matisse, Soutine, Modigliani, Picasso were at length commissioned to rewrite the Greek slogan "Nothing in excess." They have done it thoroughly. It now reads "*Everything in excess*," riding rough-shod over

that subtle and necessary distinction between *emphasis* and *distortion*, a distinction requiring a master's judgment.

Let us be tolerant; all Moderns are Platonists in desiring some mitigation from plenary fact. The trouble is their patron saint deserted them in their conclusions as to how this might be effected. His commanding gesture was *up*. The bravos of today turn from this altitude toward the only direction left to them. They look *down*. In order to change nature they claim it a necessity to degrade her.

Just here Aristotle interpolates to prove that the farther the artist removes himself from a created form, the farther the soul or essence of his subject removes itself from his work. Egyptian and Assyrian sculpture may be considered a gesture toward Platonism, but Plato condemned it as incomplete art. The fact is art through the ages has been Aristotelian.

To return then to the Layman's Art School where precepts and preaching have all been practically on one side of the art problem since the entrance of the modern issue and where a recognition of what has obtained through the ages has not only been omitted but absolutely attacked by some of those for whom the history, philosophy, conception and purpose of art were either unknown or forgotten. For them the compass of the Ship of Art pointed only East by North, directly across the seas to a fixed point,—la France.

But the passengers are demanding new vistas and little by little the cords on the compass have been loosened. It is a relief to note that the craft of late has

been seeking other ports and in time the company aboard may be treated to a world cruise. What has been distributed over Art's broad expanse awaits the explorer.

As I write my mind dwells for a moment upon the sequences of Art's latest developments; the new-comer, his welcome, his accompanying propaganda, his expositors, his subsequent expansion stimulated by the ingenuity of the modern mind, his consequent fecundity, his records of birth and growth left upon the walls of museums and private galleries.

I find much of interest as a result of honest minds in their effort to develop the Platonic idea from the legitimate foundation of Art, *a broader expression of essential character through simplification, abstraction and symbolism*. It is here that the unbiased artist stands with hat in hand in an acknowledgment as gracious as it is honest for yet another forcible development of the great art idea, the gift of true Modernism; the emphatic, free-swinging dynamism in putting an idea across.

Academism for years has been slowly moving toward greater breadth, and consequent less detail, reserving this for those cases only where a fair judgment concludes this may strengthen the subject and claim a more convincing result.

The safe and sane in modern art have recognized this budding upon the upper branches, its sap drawn from the art root, trunk and limb. They know the growth to be legitimate. They recognize its fruit.

It is here then that the vital cleavage must now be effected between a developing modern art and what is improperly associated with it; namely the ultra-modern phase, which in practically its whole feverish and forlorn excitations toward something new at any cost, has bequeathed little but despair to the cause of art and to the lover thereof.

When the critics of Art realize that they are the lone source of information to the layman concerning art in general and American art in particular, when a goodly number of them cease to swallow whole and divide the experimentalisms of the ultra output into what may be digested and what naturally turns the stomach; when they can see for instance the honest glint in Matisse and Picasso and segregate this from what is created out of a natural sense of humor or mere wayward experiment; when they will determine that distortion is the most senseless recourse which may be applied in art, and give swift burial to Modigliani and his tribe; when the little people who delve into any new possibility for a side show be duly sized up and labeled; when the writers of books on the "Masters" of modern art are content to paint their subject on a *life* instead of a *heroic-size* canvas; when the Directors of Museums appreciate the fact that the output of all artists is emphatically unlike machine-made goods and therefore shows a variable change for better or worse, and that naturally *anything* that happens from an artist's brush or chisel is therefore not sufficient to permanently represent him; when finally the grand division is made between modern and ultra-modern art, and the contro-

versy has been reedited upon a union of the Classic plus true Modernism *as opposed to* Ultra-Modernism, the issue will at last be met with a proper alignment and peace restored to an art distracted world.

Several years are now supposed to have elapsed, the curtain rises on a new scene. The audience showed signs of weariness with the last. The Romance of art became both distracting and disrupted. Comedy and Tragedy in conflict proved impossible.

I recall that almost half a century ago as a student I sat at a banquet given by the artists of Paris to the French Masters of Art.

Again I hear ringing out clear and strong the voice of Benjamin Constant declaring that in fifty years the centre of the World's art will be in America—probably in Chic-a-go.

Again the scene changes, I am at another banquet, the annual dinner of the Academy: the President has just introduced the speaker of the evening. He rises, a commanding figure with chin characteristically elevated; in clear tones he announces his subject, "The Whole Horizon of Art." I adjust my glasses for a more positive recognition.

It is McBride of "The N. Y. *Sun*."

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THINKING STRAIGHT
ON MODERN ART

CHAPTER I

DISTORTION OF FACT ¹

WITH the objections to art as it has been, let us look at the substitute which modern art proclaims, namely, the mental for the visual experience. In attempting this, the simple truth of natural fact must be avoided, for unless the mind can force itself to see something different than what the eye discloses, it necessarily drops back into the old formula. The eye beholds a pretty woman—but the mind, embarrassed by the new formula, flouts a natural impression and is compelled to present something else, a striking example of which had illustration in "Modern Art" ² where the subject was fitted with a new set of features and more than double her age. The mind, therefore, was assuming a terrible risk in temporizing with those sensitive possessions and prerogatives of the eternal feminine.

This single case may be multiplied indefinitely to cover a host of cases wherein the theory becomes unworkable. This vast exception, however, does not invalidate the theory as a theory, for it is quite within reason and experience to come upon cases where nature is incompetent to express the mind of the artist.

It becomes a staggering blow, however, to the universalized assumption that in graphic art it is possible

¹ See Appendix.

² "Modern Art; Why, What and How," page 48.

at all times to give the mind the right of way in presenting a case where nature is the subject *per se*.

Portraiture in its length and breadth, in its start and conclusion, in its practical dollar and cents value, in its perfectly reasonable, plausible and peremptory demand, is a very large and formidable lion in the path of the theory.

But aside from this, modernism finds accommodation for the supremacy of the mind of the painter. Before following this lead, however, let us remind the reader that mind in all art heretofore, has occupied a large place. Mind has selected usable excerpts from Nature and has had its complete and satisfactory way with them. It has organized natural fact, supplied to it as material (sometimes antagonistic), into practical service by the application of the principles of construction—a process that does really require brains. Mind, then, is no stranger to art up to the present, and that it should conceive a mission in art which demands a reconstruction, not for unification, but as a metamorphosis of its fact—a conversion of this into something else,—is indeed a privilege not to be denied but only to be questioned on the two counts of possibility and practicability.

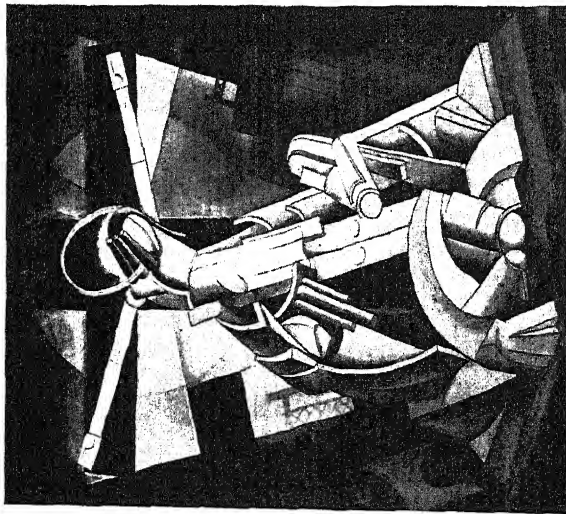
What then does this re-editing of nature demand? Frankly, naught else but her distortion. This notion never entered into the calculation of either Greek or Renaissance art because unnecessary to its purpose. It was conceived as a necessity today when, what aforetime was produced by the union of mind and hand, may now be produced without either. The camera is the



POSTER — *Julius Klinger*
 DISTORTION JUSTIFIED BY RHYTHMIC FORM AND
 DECORATIVE DESIGN



DISTORTION, EXPRESSIVE OF ENFEEBLED MENTALITY,
 JUSTIFIED BY ULTRA-MODERNISM



"THE CRUCIFIED NEW YORKER."

Vladimir Bobritsky.

Example of Physical Cubism.



A WOMAN—HENRI MATISSE

Simplified Form of Post Impressionism,
Nature observed through the "Innocent Eye."

grim spectre in a mechanical age that has produced this possibility, a possibility that has cheapened the values in naturalistic art, just as mass production in countless cases has turned art into utility.

The *mind*, which is so insistent in the modern philosophy, was insistent with Greek art in no less a degree. Venus symbolized to the mind impersonal beauty; Mercury, swift service; Jupiter, authority. The Greek antique is a large order in symbolism, for the Greek mind enjoyed the symbol *in* nature.

What then is the problem to be proved, and *how* in modern art? This: To give mind its proper chance, nature must submit to revision. Like the Tariff, the question is, is it to be revision "up" or "down?" To improve nature and revise her "up" seems impossible, although this was the effort of Greek art in its striving to express the archetype. It was a strong point in the philosophy of Plato in which Aristotle concurred, that though nature was pretty good there was yet room for improvement. It was handed to the artist therefore to see to this. He was looked to to create the *archetype*; that was his commission, *to revise nature up*. The remaining recourse is to revise her "down." And this implies distortion.

Now here, then, is a proposition which we can only accept or reject on the basis of its results. It resolves itself into a question of taste. The just and tactful "Emancipator" has said, "To a man who likes that sort of a thing, that is just the sort of a thing that sort of a man would like."

This question has been essayed by every writer who

has put out a book on the new Tendency, with the result of an accumulation of clever, conscionable and characteristic plausibilities; an earnest attempt to justify one of the major proposals of the newer art. It is evident in reviewing these that the writers feel on the defensive and the result apologetics.

From the arena, Mary Cecil Allen declares, "Interest (in art) involves distortion," which suggests in this latter day that mere truth palls and to the jaded taste of the present, pepper and tabasco are counted a necessity. Here is complete concomitance with what is now being served by the theatre and the movies—interest demands revision of moral standards to date, defiance of principle and a distortion of law. The public craves the tabasco.

The advocates of Distortion as an art principle, it may be observed, express their arguments in carefully weighed phrases, in surprisingly good and effective English, stating with curious exactitude the simple thought that is in them. It is a fair question, therefore, to ask why employ the strictly classic form of literary expression in place of a distortion of the mother tongue. If distortion is more expressive in paint and clay, why deny it to a sister art? Distortion or even exaggeration in literature is taboo. No author would risk it. His reader would feel aggrieved that he had thus dared to trifle with him.

Do we find distortion in the drama? If there is one demand on the actor which is paramount, it is that he express nature, its whole truth and nothing but its truth. His author may deal with the foibles and eccen-

* See Appendix II.

tricitities of character, even to an approach of caricature, and the actor in making that character live before his audience, will hold himself strictly to, and only to, a *possibility*. The limit of compliment an actor may achieve unto is for his audience to quit the play house with a sensation of reality, remarking "How natural!" Nature, whole nature, and nothing but nature is the compass of his art.

It is only in the let-down of the present day "freedom" that distortion of plot has found a place in the absurd disillusion of the "Talkies." If there is one thing more than another which is thinning the audiences of the talkies, it is the mistaken notion of these manufacturers of excitement that natural possibility may be discarded.¹

¹ I mention a single example which may adequately express what is frequently encountered in this new grade of art, namely, "Love among the Millionaires," wherein after the most painstaking and highly expensive situations have been prepared by the scenic managers, we have the impossible situation of a group of brakemen, waiters and a railroad restaurant keeper traveling by auto and arriving the same day in Florida to be present at an elaborate party (the company at which were invited on that day) and finding them appearing after that precipitous journey with no time for any preparation, in *white ties and swallow tails*, which to their experience was as foreign as finger bowls and party manners. Such distortion of possibility sends the audience from the playhouse with the general remark, "Well, what do they take us for?" The well ordained play in its amusing development is sacrificed on this stupid scaffold of distortion. Questioning the adults in a company of fourteen, all save the children seemed outraged at this and other impossible situations. The children did not see these, but declared it was "fine." Those advocates of the child-like criterion in art may well pause and reflect. The psychologists tell us that the "talkies" are now trained to the level of thirteen year old mentality.

The art of architecture likewise is immune from any opportunity here. Of the many possibilities open for originality and invention, architecture closes the door absolutely to this.

Music, in side-stepping this offer of modernism, joins hands with literature, neither finding a use for it, a circuit of the arts proving it unwelcome, save to modernistic sympathy. "Interest," then, in none of these arts, "involves distortion."

It is judged a sufficient excuse to the second rate poet for not expressing his thought in the metre he first assumed which finally found its culmination in the hobble-te-hoi of Free Verse. If bottles are bent out of shape, it is done in the same spirit of the ill-equipped poet who butchers a word for the sake of conforming it to his metre. The only redemption for poetry or prose is to pull it to pieces, start afresh and labor until the elements used, undistorted, conform. The same may apply to graphic art. Distortion in nine times out of ten is merely a lazy man's substitute for emphasis.

When other means are lacking to differentiate the modernist, distortion accommodates. This is chargeable to Cézanne himself, since in many cases one can find no warrant for distortion, save as a camouflage for clumsy drawing which puts it at the farther pole from the technique of *the school*. Albeit, let the purist reflect that the artist should always be given precedence over nature. He is as much the head of his house as the cave man who pulls his wife around by the hair. We somehow acknowledge a thrill by this assertion of freedom and authority.

Cézanne had no sympathy whatever with the Picasso type of distortion and never used it. He leaned on nature and respected it up to the point of affording him a basis, the material of which he sought to analyze and reconstruct in his own mental laboratory. In the practical process the result turned out of the laboratory seldom was found adequate. In his writings and quoted words his lament was that of the true artist ever reaching for an ideal beyond him.

Says Frank Jewett Mather¹: "His mannerisms and foibles became gospel for the uneasy and abler young men of twenty years ago, and the revolution, under the watchword of liberty, achieved only a liberty which he would have utterly denounced."

Although a synthesis of fact which may result in distortion is a legitimate and oftentimes a needful recourse in numerous instances and practised consciously or unconsciously in minor degree by even the academic painter, particularly in landscape, yet here, as in every departure from truth, there stand two men in shining raiment with swords drawn. They are Taste and Common Sense and their slogan is, "Thus far and no farther." Yet a little distortion becomes a dangerous thing, largely because the world is supplied with excessivists for every new activity which appears, those who fail to realize that the surest means of killing a new hobby is to ride it to death. For these people, the Olympian serenity is the equivalent of a sermon at a picnic. To them a simple statement is as colorless and

¹ "Modern Art."

vapid as a milk diet to an Esquimau. If the idea is to get there, let it be hyperbolic.

How much more effective to commence a statement with an oath, sprinkle it well with occasional oaths and wind up with one reserved in largest size. This is one of the requirements in Bolshevic propaganda—profane emphasis. Emotionalism plays a part in all of this. The reply of the Irishman is in point, when a passer by remarked, "Don't you see the snake is dead?" "Yes," said Pat as he continued his stomping with both feet, "but I want to make him conscious of it."

How can we better be made conscious that a man has hands, feet and other features than by forcing them upon our notice through exaggerated distortion. This is a completely childlike and ingenuous means to an end and as completely befits the Matisse notion that "a little child should lead them." But if nature has supplied man with a head, can we not take his feet for granted—if feet, can we not take the head for granted without making the bystander brutally conscious of them?

It is naïvely suggested that when Picasso enlarges the feet, he wishes to suggest "strong contact with the ground"; why strong contact with the ground if the Creator made feet merely to support the figure upon the ground, which the normal foot does? What reason can be suggested for the enlargement of a lady's hands lying in her lap with no strong contact upon anything?

In Rodin's "Burghers of Calais" why should but one figure of the group be supplied with distorted feet to emphasize his contact with the ground while the seven others are able to stand without a strong con-

tact? Is it not rather that he chose to represent one of the Burghers, representing the proletariat, as a laborer?

In looking for a marked example of distortion of fact, let us review two pictures by the American artist, George Biddle. I select him, not only because he has chosen in these examples to be particularly emphatic, but also with a feeling that he is abundantly able to sustain the criticism, being one of the truly talented men now upholding ultra modernism. The fact that he is well proven to express the beauty possible to a lesser emphasis is revealed in his charming "Winter on the Hudson," a design of marked linear quality and subtlety of color, developing its rhythmic line of deer and their stylized shadows.

The "Wedding Feast" shows a group of nine Mexicans seated about a table on which there is a single small dish of food, albeit two tankards of wine. The sprawling uncouthness of attitude is the sole bit of character which is without exaggeration, all else being an attempt to force distortion in form and feature, from the pipestem arms of the old mother to the muscle stuffed anatomies of strong men and women. The reflections upon the hospitality provided in the single dish should be an unwelcome thrust to Mexican sensibility, since as a nation, its reputation for hospitality is pronounced, and would probably render the artist *persona non grata* were he again to apply for it.

As representation, however, another example is still more explicit, and unnecessary. While "representation" is shunned by a certain order of the modern elect, in

the case of a canvas of seven horses in a field, it becomes so emphatic as might serve some thrifty veterinarian for a frontispiece to his pamphlet, thus inscribed, "*If you don't want your horse to look like these, use ———'s remedies.*" Here the artist has unconsciously depicted most of the evils that horseflesh is heir to, from spavin and sweeny to spring-halt and mal-nutrition. Why the artist should conceive these wrecks of the boneyard as an agreeable sight in either nature or art, or why the hand of distortion should be laid on any part of nature with the avowed intention of making it *worse* than it is, is a fair question to one who is able to produce the rare beauty of block print designs and ceramics and of charming conceits in bronze or refinements in clay. As an all-around artist he perhaps thinks it appropriate to exhibit both sides of the shield.

As a remedy for "the popular distaste for distortion," we are advised by the author of "Painters of the Modern Mind" to familiarize oneself thoroughly with the sight of them, and then a curious thing happens. We no longer notice distortions of any kind in them."

It would also be possible to use any one of a number of liquors which would accomplish the same result for the natural vision. The recommendation is equivalent, in order to foster associations with the childlike or primitive mind, to take to the woods, associate with the natives, and in time their vernacular would not only be unperceived, but would replace our King's English.

Distortion for purposes of design, although presenting its strong claim to the modern mind, may be held unnecessary. While linear continuity is always agreeable and occasionally compulsory in design, the ingenuity of the artist is here to be called into play in the supply of appropriate concomitants to carry on linear requirements. The artist who will pull a leg in art finds his counterpart in that designing person who will do so in business. He is in the class with the poet who would add a syllable to a word to make it fit his metre instead of recasting a line. At best it is a subterfuge, to be overridden to be sure, by the genius who occasionally defies all law, and thus creates a precedent for the little one who is not a genius. (See appendix.)

It is this same trailing of eccentric leads that has established the stupid fad of leaving a hiatus between objects and their backgrounds. Matisse is again responsible, for since the welding of the contour with its supporting area is one of the most difficult problems of painting, Matisse realized the child could not accomplish it and to be childlike he adopted the easier mode. We now are obliged to look at the unfinish thus created by a rim of unpainted canvas, but what is worse, a deliberately painted halo of white surrounding each figure of the truly ultra-modern production.

One need not call attention to the riot of distortion now surging through art's corridors. It may be cited as comparable with Prohibition, as a "noble experiment"—an exchange of nature as it was thought she was, for nature as it was thought she ought to be.

None worse than Cézanne could have had bequeathed

to him the fathering of this idea. He was in the position of one outside the garden of the Hesperides longing for its fruit; and yet other aspirants, much more worthily equipped, have somehow failed in a complete and satisfactory effort to enter in. Having experimented with the idea, he sought to make it a *creedal declaration*.

From all this the art of the grotesque stands distinctly apart, for while it accepts distortion as a *carte blanche*, the notable difference lies in the fact that the grotesque is grotesque with a purpose; whereas distortion without a purpose is grotesque.

CHAPTER II

THE SUBJECTIVE VS. THE OBJECTIVE

THE discussion of distortion prompts a question now to the fore in the minds of most artists, and one which is attempted to be solved by the modern mind in art: if it be true that the subjective is of more importance than the objective, should not means be found to put in its proper relation thereto the less important?

Should not the artist, though accepting the limitations of his technique and willing to wear them as bit and bridle and to bear the burden which is assumed, be yet unfettered to carry it to its destination, head free, and by whatsoever route he may elect?

The practical question is this: is the new philosophy robust enough to carry its load which it has assumed; do the conclusions *support* the premises; do the assumptions justify the results?

To jump the case, displacing logical processes through cause to effect, and on to the main question, without ceremony, demanding results—results by comparison—on the dictum “by their fruits ye shall know them,” might prove sufficient to practical minds but excludes that acknowledged right which the law always extends to the opposite view.

Practically the whole of the modern tendency is still

on probation, is still experimentally working it out. It should be given its opportunity either to justify its creed or correct what it finds impractical—as has been done by two of its most important leaders, Picasso and Matisse. At present modern art should be taken as an interim certificate, a promise of something yet to be delivered.

It is seldom found that pioneers cut a straight trail. Bergson assures us that Evolution frequently turns toward the back track, to rest awhile amid primitive influences that it may reinforce its power to push forward toward higher achievement.

Says Alexander Black in his "Great Art Delusion": "We may have needed the era we are living in, or living down, to test conclusively the whole theory of degeneration."

More than a century ago Schiller remarked: "Art is the process of widening nature without going beyond it." But time has passed on and the science urge toward discovery and our native urge toward change, experiment and freedom, have combined to rewrite this epigram. Indeed so completely has it been modified that from the starting point of its commendable liberality we may follow along through varied opinions until we read instead "Art begins where nature leaves off."

In that gamut is comprehended every phase of the art of today and moreover every separated and individualized belief has its reason for being and can state its claims for existence.

Instead of the dictum of Archipenko which ex-

presses the insufficiency of most epigrams, the truth, as usual, lies in the mean. Let us substitute for the above, *art continues when nature leaves off*; for, the moment that any work of pictorial or sculptural art is begun, nature and art join forces and work the thing together. In time nature is allowed to pass out and art then has the revisory last word.

It is this revisory last word which determines the scale of importance between the subjective and the objective influence in art.

CHAPTER III

THE "REPRESENTATION" MISUNDERSTANDING

PROBABLY the most disturbing notion in art to the mind of the ultra-modernist is that the truly great art of the world is representational. The fact remains a lion in the path of those who would take the latest view of art.

How to dispose of the fact that the great exemplars of art proceeded to their tasks with one hand on brush and chisel and the other touching the hem of Nature's mantle, following with implicit faith every step and turn of this leader, is variously handled by differing apostles of the new movement.

To one a summary edict seems the easiest way out, and under the historic precedent of the fanaticism of the dark ages, he explodes with the now famous ejaculation, "Burn the Galleries!" To others the procedure is tempered with a modernized logic quite germane with kindred examples of modernized art. To yet another a canonical excommunication is deemed sufficient, "Representation died in the nineteenth century."

Mr. Ralph Pearson, however, in his "How to See Modern Pictures," concedes that most of the great masterpieces of the world, though anecdotal in character, express the greater attribute of design.

The question to Mr. Pearson, following upon this admission, is why not concede to all artists of today precisely the same intention which, as artists, they follow with even a greater keenness than some of the masters; this insistence that their representations of nature shall be supplied with the safeguard of design.

Surely no artist who has had any experience in jury work will deny that no picture howsoever good in nature quality but lacking the requirements of a good balanced design is acceptable. Fidelity to nature is of small moment before this tribunal.

It is upon the assumption that the picture faithful to nature is necessarily damned, that has provoked the stupid controversy over Mr. Luke Fildes' canvas entitled "The Crisis." This represents a doctor observing the symptoms which hold in the balance the life of a little girl. The lamp light of the cottage interior is thrown sharply upon these two principal characters of the drama. In the gloom of the background are seen, in close proximity, the two distraught parents. Out of the window the faint gray fingers of the dawn streak the sky.

After listening to the various types of vituperation from the newer school, some of which stoutly deny that the work can be regarded as art, all that is necessary is to close our eyes to the incident, forgetting the element of suspense (so valuable in literature) or that the darkest hours have now been spent and that the dawn is a symbol of hope; letting all this go and turn our attention to the art of this picture *in its design*. Let us dispatch the wonderful technical ability of

Mr. Fildes as of no importance. What remains?—one of the most conclusive proofs that could be found of the intense reliance which the artist placed upon the principles of art, resulting in a complete pictorial design.

I know of few examples better fitted than this to serve as a text to exploit these principles before a class of students and to prove their utility in creating a design.

To refute this notion that representational art has died, let us glance for a moment at the sister art of music wherein it maintains a strong hold in the motifs of such work as Beethoven's "Prometheus," Wagner's "Fire Music," Coleridge Taylor's "Hiawatha," in each the effort being the representation of fire. Or Mendelssohn's "Fingal's Cave" in which is depicted the motion of water, Brahms's rendering of "Autumn" with its falling leaves and sighing winds, "The Brook" in Beethoven's "Pastoral Symphony," or the birds in "Waldweben" from Siegfried, or "After the Storm" so effectively depicted by Liszt in his "Preludes."

Then coming to the modern, with its discordant variants, we find the impressionistic portrayal of birds in Stravinsky's "Sacre du Printemps."

In every case of the above, the evident effort of the composer was to represent, as well as his means would enable, the natural fact as it appealed in nature.

But as to representation in its essence, has it a place in art or not? The artist is a combination of a poet and a man of science. This union is to be marked in the best of our present day painters, especially of land-

scape. The emotion on which their art so largely rests is received direct from nature. The poetic instinct promptly responds to this. Were this lacking fewer landscapes of note would be produced. The dependence, the reliance, the urge to proceed leans implicitly upon it.

Interpretation of the mood of nature becomes the problem of the painter. Misinterpretation of an emotional experience is in the same class with a false interpretation of the spirit of a friend whom one may misquote. If the conveyance of a specific emotion is distorted to fit the demands of a formula, it may still be art, but remains outside of an original experience. In other words, the man has merely used nature as a convenience for his scientific purpose, instead of becoming a poet in the revelation of a first emotion.

To be specific, if the grandeur of a sky has moved him with a great emotion that he would reveal to another, or if nature in any of her varied moods has appealed to him as worthy of such a revealing that he would pass it on to some other man, that other would miss the message in paint as surely as in poetic phrase, did he not secure its full essence, and its full essence means nature taken practically as she was when the emotion caught and inspired him.

Did Shelley spare one whit of pains to absorb and transcribe the "Cloud" as he actually saw it? Did Chaucer or Burns or Grey or Wordsworth or Keats strive to make us see nature as she was, or not?

Howsoever interesting a cubistic cloud might become to a nature lover in the thought that this was

personal interpretation and in catholic spirit, accept it and love it, still in its plenary presentation the truer poetic quality would *find* him perhaps more fully than by any other method.

I state this with all due regard for the truly acknowledged thrill which accompanies the interpolation of the man in art, a highly important factor in the range of modernized feeling, but I state the fact as a fact out of regard for that grade of mind that finds nature in certain of her moods sufficient for every artistic purpose.

That this may be true and appreciated by certain orders of artists now rated in the modern class, I need but mention the plenary representation of such craftsmen as Burchfield and Hopper for whom the essence of their subjects, more frequently than not, depends upon the last word of stark realism. Their work is not only representational, it is closely imitative.

It is the Babbitt penetration for character which necessitates a reporter's fidelity for detail. It is because Main Street of the western town stands forth in its grim reality or that the mansard roofs are pictured by Mr. Hopper with an uncompromising fidelity, that they are accepted and loved as one of the "finds" of today's art.

Representation, however, is not necessarily concerned with detail. In fact it may quite ignore it and attain its purpose. Simplification here may be recorded as a stimulation to art from photography; for in shunning the photographic, painting has synthesized, and it is only since photography's day that our

prejudice has increased against the mirror held to nature. We hold in reverence Vermeer and Holbein, but we also hold that Gérôme and Meissonier might have known better.

It is one of the benefits to be accredited to Modern Art that the standard painters of today are broadening more and more in this sensible demand for less detail in their representational art. Photography as to painting occupies the same place as the "talkies" to the drama, an insistence on the part of science that through mechanical means a like result is obtainable.

We spurn color photography in the same mood as we accept the "talkies." We endure them both as *economical*. The expression "hand painted" may not imply a better result, but it makes sure of human intervention and if we are to have representation in art, we somehow prefer the modifying influences of the human mind to the exactitudes of science. "Art is nature with the man added."

These varied movements will leave their historic imprint as silhouettes passing before Time's Monument of Art, but where the procession will eventually pause will be at the final "restoration of authority" in the eternal principles of art.

See "Art Principles in Practice," Putnam's.

CHAPTER IV

HOW SHALL WE JUDGE ART?

"If we are to judge *works* of art accurately and consistently its principles must be mastered. Otherwise, we are without a standard and our opinions are but the outgrowth of the chaos of our moods. A true appreciation of art cannot grow up without a complete understanding of the æsthetic laws governing it." Willard Huntington Wright, "Modern Painting."

I am glad to have such corroboration from this authority since I have written a book to prove its truth namely—"Art Principles in Practice."

Quite to the contrary, Mr. Wilenski feels that any work by an original artist has an intrinsic value which can never be altered by any reaction on the part of other spectators and is therefore "right" as a work of art. This, of course, opens the door to any inmate of an insane asylum and from that all the way back toward normalcy.

Clive Bell holds that we have no right to consider anything a work of art to which we do not act emotionally; all of which is considered by Mr. Wilenski as "fundamentally wrong." Again, neither of these

writers has thought to fall back on a criterion of judgment based on the immutable principles which govern all the arts.

Both in the "Conception of Art" and "Art Principles in Practice" the simple means of running down such principles and establishing such a basis is shown to be their recognition, as a base *because discoverable* in all the arts. If any principle is not found in *all* the arts it must be thrown out as not universal.

With such impersonal criteria, the opinion of the one who makes what he pleases, and considers it art, and the connoisseur whose reaction is governed by taste, forms necessarily an entirely personal and not a universal judgment.

Of necessity the modern movement offers itself to *some sort* of a standard of judgment. It ~~cannot~~ claim immunity nor exemptions, nor favoritism, nor coddling. Whatever stands, abides there on its intrinsic worth and not by appeal. What falls, falls for want of a foundation. The failure to put good seed in need not surprise the experimentalist when he reaps a crop of weeds.

When Matisse sows clay and brings forth the deformities in sculpture which marked his earlier career, he ceased to be an artist and became a trifler. The only "design" to be recognized in these attempts was the design he evidently had to make a sensation and not a work of art.

The elimination of such exhibits is inevitable. It is only the anarchist without standards who would speak for them. It is on the same basis of appraisal that we

may accept with pleasure certain other offerings in both paint and clay from the same hand.

The argument need not be prolonged: the whole of it is right there. In the "Conception of Art" the author makes the point that few works tally one hundred per cent as art. There are all kinds of degrees of approach to this consummation. There is art, some art, less art, no art, and the artist fills these categories as he is able. The "no jury" exhibition is an acknowledgment that *standard* in art does not count, while the result beheld is the best possible argument that it does.

The task therefore lightens as one approaches the work of the reactionists from the ultra-modernist branch of the New Tendency. That this reaction is now well established is merely a proof that the great majority of us are normal, together with the fact that whatever the acclaim for novelties, a novelty is the shortest lived invention which man's genius is able to concoct. The Jack-in-the-Box surprise does not wear at all with the beloved true and tried Peggy.

Art of Today may be divided into three parts:

Ultra Modern Art,
Modern Art,
The Art of Modern Painters.

In the first class is found the "originals" who fired the first shot. They are the "wild men" who were out for surprises, sensations and destructions.

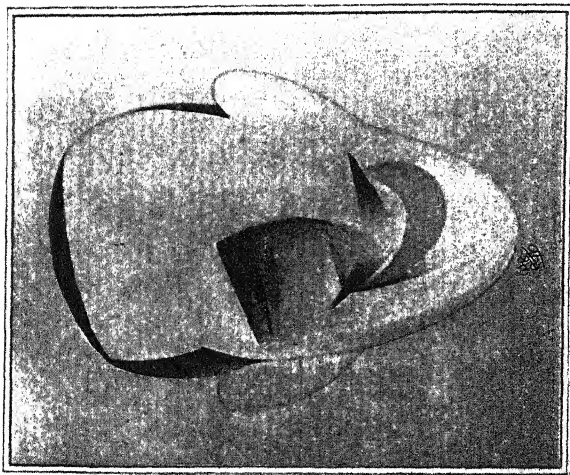
In the second class are found those who freely subscribe to much of the philosophy and some of the ex-



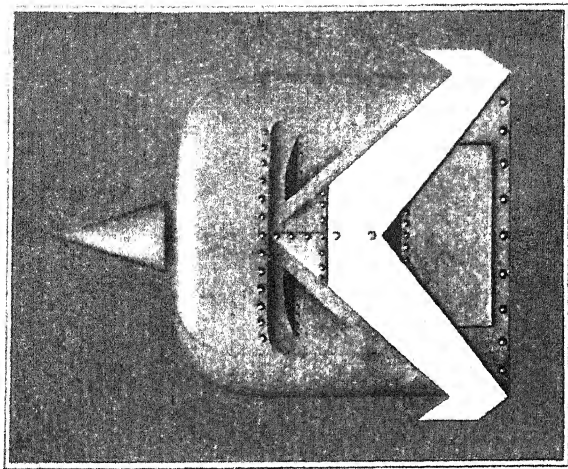
GOOD LINEAR PLACEMENT OF ELEMENTS



TWO EXAMPLES BY DERAIN



ALFONSO XIII., KING OF SPAIN.



PAUL VON HINDENBURG, PRESIDENT OF THE GERMAN REICH.

Added force to Caricature through Cubistic treatment

pressions found adequate to set forth that philosophy, but have no use for surprises, sensations or destructions.

In the third class are those well-satisfied with the philosophy of art as expressed through her principles but ever looking for a more complete technical expression of them. There are no other classes of artists today.

The exponents of the first class, as pioneers setting forth on a virgin adventure, were in the position of the team before the plow. To them the field of art required plowing up and sowing with new seed. In order that the plow should completely turn the sod, it was necessary for the team to go beyond the limits of the field. It was obliged to trespass and infringe upon the domain beyond. It has left its footprints as a trespasser, out of bounds, and in the field of metaphysics. The "No Trespassing" sign was ignored and the footprints are there.

Our judgment of Modern Art from its truly basal and significant point of view is not concerned with Cubism, Post Impressionism or Futurism which emphasize categories of kind, but with the intention of being faithful to the higher demands of Art. Judged on the standard of success or failure concerning them, there may be found examples in each of these separate camps on which they qualify. Take for such a test the two designs by Derain. The one qualifies upon every requirement of sound design, the principles easily pronounced in a swift and confident organization of its elements. The other is such an example as could only

have been produced as an intentional insult to mankind at large in an egoistic delirium, or as a result from a mind befogged by hard liquor. The reproduction in black and white tells but half the tale of ineptness. The color is a smear of vert emeraud of the same tone from foreground into the distance, where nature implores for some relief of this crudeness, but where no thought of this atmospheric demand is vouchsafed by the painter. As a design also, it is puerile.

Or again, why should this folly be charged against the artist who makes amends in the noble landscape of which he is capable, especially of the decorative order, or in the occasional head with its evident effort toward classic abstraction; albeit most of these betray an unsophisticated technique and an occasional false value, which demote them from the higher expressions in painting.

Or let us make the same test in the same spirit of honest search for good in the work of many another follower of the modern trend. Judgment is of necessity made not as an accommodation of a newly formed coterie in art, but on the standard demanded by Art of the ages. It is here that the new tendency beats its head against a rock of Gibraltar, asking of the world at large to alter immutable principles which have governed all art at all times. It is on this rock, standing fast in the current that ultra-modernism will eventually be wrecked.

It is only when it is conceded that the principles of art are the necessary foundation from which any excursion in art sets forth that "vital and living" art will

ensue. With such a standard, freedom and originality are abundantly possible—and abundantly safeguarded. The sober and sane of this new movement evidently know this and are producing art that will survive.

It is not a question whether or not beauty is conserved or dethroned; it is wholly a question of the violation or the conservation of art's foundation. Instead of this we have partizans of "isms" in art instead of critics thereof, protagonists of an adopted mode swallowing whole whatever appears when the net is drawn in and the catch delivered. Thus we have an impossible Gauguin, bad from every point of design and lacking the first elements of scale and perspective, pictured in a magazine which discants ably on its merits, oblivious of the fact that this is one of the trifles which most artists weed from a season's output and usually destroy or paint over for canvas economy, and which was evidently found among his post-mortems. What matter to the editor who has to do only with the latest things? Let this stand for the numerous cases to be observed in the magazines devoted wholly to setting forth the latest forms of art. It is this uncritical and indiscriminating omniverousness which can only disgust the sane reader and bring into disrepute the standing of an artist capable of real accomplishment in art.

The fact is that never before in its long history has literature ever been saddled with such a load of buncombe as it has been made to carry for the exploitation of ultra-modern art. One reads those outpourings with such mingled emotions as disturbed that southern clergyman during the early 60's when asked if he had

read "Uncle Tom's Cabin." He replied with emphasis, "I have read it; I have laughed over it; I have cried over it; I've got mad over it, and then I didn't know *which* I was over it."

In fact, if one keeps on reading these ebullitions—serious, dignified, confident, with an assumed rightness of view, he finds himself in the same thrall as the child in the grasp of Hans Christian Andersen. To him both the goblins and giants seem real; he in time quite believes in them. Psychology here stands waiting to explain in part the result. If one repeats a half truth often enough, he in time believes it a whole truth.

Having launched upon the enterprise, these stalwarts will see it through; with ships burning there is no turning back. The reiteration for the time has established for many of them a sufficiently substantial and reasonable belief in what they have said.

But, dear reader, do you suppose in thirty years' time that these conclusions will remain? Is it possible in the perspective appraisal of a generation, and still less in a century, that the experimental vagaries of Kuniyosi, Pascin, Chirico, will have established them in the world's thought as anything more than original minds willing to risk an experiment or play the pied piper to an ever ready following of novelty hunters?

In the great settlement of art values, the works of what the French were pleased to call the "wild men" will doubtless be viewed in about the size of a vaccination mark as related to the whole body, an indication that in the economy of progress the virus here introduced played its effective part in checking the contagion

of a formalized and stereotyped condition, and in so far it was welcome; and in that service it accomplished and completed its purpose. This is its intrinsic service. As a contribution to art values, however, one may well challenge these claimants for honors.

Matisse has modelled images of distorted shape—but to what purpose? He is rated a colorist in painting, but these thin cardboard colorations of canvas become little more than a mockery to such a designation as compared with the real colorists of the world: Giorgione, Veronese, Titian, Delacroix, Monticelli, Montegna, Dupré, Blakelock, Ryder, painters who scorned the flat mixed tints of the house painter and strove for a color result synthetic, “far in” and mysterious, in effect like a jewel, occasionally securing the “quality of inner light.” The choice of synchromatic color is scientific and can be had from any color chart, and this is the compass of the color of Matisse, adopted in part from Persian art, from which he also obtains his none too competent designs.

Can Picasso maintain the exalted place made for him by this booming of ardent admirers who confound the will to do with results to see? Will intention *per se* hold in the acid test of performance? Can the one substitute for the other? Can his crudities in color, his debaucheries of form, or his commonplaces when striving for pure and classic drawing continue to excite?¹

¹ It is worth while to judge by comparison the serious attempts of Picasso to produce a purely classical drawing. A single glance at most of these outlines is sufficient to place him far down the line when compared with pure outline drawings, now produced in

Will the critical appraisalment of a future generation tolerate the laurel crown landed by the deft fingers of modern king makers upon the brow of Derain? Can it possibly retain him in the office of the "arbiter elegantium" of art?

Will not in time the world's art sense discover that it was only at intervals that Cézanne ever accomplished his ideal and that much of what has now been absorbed by the credulous was to his honest mind only fit to be left in the woods or used in the kitchen for service by the scullion?

The few works of his which were truly good, neither in his own estimate nor before any reasonable jury, are rated as more than truly good *for him*.

As I read the reiterations of encomium by these accomplished masters of literary style, I confess to a confusion of pleasure midway between an acknowledgment to good English and the respect compelled in listening to an able attorney who is pleading a case against one. The ingenuity, the adroitness in rebuttal, the accumulated reasons for belief are spread out in such alarming array as to make one doubt whether or not his own counsel will be able to overcome them. One smiles agreeably by an irresistible compulsion at the invention which can make so good a case out of so uncertain a cause. We should realize that modern art is largely a literary adventure, a composition of about one part literature, one part art. The partnership has

some of our academies. Neither in ensemble drawings, nor in the critical articulations of anatomy, nor in line modulation does Picasso stand up with these student draughtsmen of the schools.

succeeded; it has proved a satisfactory business venture. Dealers now opening their galleries to the latest things smile in the thought that their publicity doesn't cost a penny; advertisement is free, thanks to the newness.

Those of us who sat at the cradle of the modern idea which accorded to mind the greater valuation over nature, felt a natural sympathy for the newcomer baptised into that belief. A generation has passed, the babe has attained his majority and may be addressed in his maturity, demanding credentials.

When mind took hold, free passes were handed out to ride the new hobby. There was no limit to the field; it was an open entry. The result was therefore a motley display of minds. Scientific, mathematical minds, insisting on the line of plummet, inventive minds ferreting out enigmas with curious care, vulgar and bawdy minds bent on putridities, feeble minds doggedly insisting that we observe their clamor and harken, insane minds claiming distinction under the nomenclature of the latest "ism."

But nowhere in the range of these animadversions can be found a mind that has done for art what to the Greek intelligence was art's chiefest demand, a mind to create the Archetype, a mind bent on lifting instead of debasing nature.

The exchange which modern art makes is to substitute for the universal mind (a correlative term for taste), a mind which now discards the conclusions of the ages on which artists and philosophers had bent a combined intelligence from the days of Plato, Phidias

and Aristotle to Leonardo, Michael Angelo, Rubens, Delacroix, Turner and Whistler. In other words to exchange for the mind of experience the mind of experiment. To face the question, How shall we judge art? necessitates an approach with the facts well before us.

CHAPTER V

"VITAL, LIVING" ART

"There is no such thing as modern art; there is art and there is advertising."

ALBERT STERNER.

A FRANK and necessary word that may be said about the makers of Ultra Modernism, both painters and sculptors, is that they cannot be classed as great artists. They are painters and sculptors interested in technical expressions necessitated by new viewpoints. To the modernistic mind this "how" is so important that we are told by some of their high priests it is the only consideration. This necessarily places the scientific basis under the new endeavor. Now, although the manner of saying a thing is what gives it an art value, the art value necessarily partakes of the degree of importance of what is said. The two values move up or down together. It requires much more literary technique to manage such a subject as Dante's "Inferno" than a ditty to my lady's eyebrow; much more for Titian's "Entombment" than a Matisse caricature. To the minds of both classes of artists the *how* is of equal importance, but in each case it is the *what* that establishes the difference in intrinsic values. It is a question of hitching to a star, or not.

Can you not see four hooded figures pausing before the sign near the entrance of the New York University

"Exhibition of Living Art"? They enter seeking some vast gallery where after five centuries at last has been housed the discovery of what is really to survive in art. But no, they are directed to the first door on the right opening on a study room. On the wall at one side in several alcoves are small pictures on paper or canvas labelled severally, "French School," "English School," "American School," etc. The subjects are trivial, still life, bits of landscape, the everlasting feminine in the nude, a distorted head by Matisse given the place of honor. They pass in and out among the alcoves. When speech comes to them Raphael exclaims: "Didst translate the sign correctly, Angelo—'Living'?"

"Aye, and with the subtle implication that what has gone before is now dead."

"But stay," interrupts Botticelli with characteristic bravura; "'Tis but students' pranks of this institution; naught is sacred with the free-born American."

Then Titian, touching the arm of one bent over his task (a product of Italy via the East Side), inquires the truth concerning this "*vital, living art.*"

"It is placed here," replies the boy, "by enthusiastic protagonists of the new tendency in the hope that the rising generation may imbibe the influence of what is to be the art of the future."

A cold dumbness now seems to have enwrapped the group. With bowed head, they silently regain the portal and file slowly out into the sunlight; the sky is blue and white, sparrows twitter in the trees, the turf of Washington Square is green and brilliant.

The Cinquecentists see nothing of all this—but in-

stead, before their vision appears the golden splendor of a yesterday.

If standards in art are now to be readjusted we must forthwith demote the art of the past and apply that new forged phrase "Ananias" to what has been. The two arts cannot be gaged on the same standard. That we may have no serious apprehension of the result of this is assured by two age-long facts. There are no peoples in the whole range of creation that have not been supplied with two specific instincts—a sense of a supreme being with a yearning to know him, and an initial sense of beauty. These two influences have gone hand in hand since the world began, and from the fetish worship thus prompted in the tribes of darkest Africa to its efflorescence in the Renaissance of Italy, they have determined in both religion and art a basis from which standards are evoked. To throw Beauty to the winds is as fatuous as to attempt to smother these God-given attributes. The gruesome travesties both of human form and natural aspect, which are now offered by the ultra-modernist, is a tax upon that fundamental sense which will not long be endured. The demand, the goal of instinct is *objective reality*, and it is by this and only this that at last instinct is satisfied. Art's demand is *the reality of truth*.

It is significant of the reaction now setting in that C. J. Bulliet, an erstwhile sympathizer with the modern viewpoint, remarks, "Of late in Paris—since Picasso, the modernist whose wells of inspiration are down to the muddy dregs, are turning once more to Ingres."

CHAPTER VI

SYMPATHY AND SANITY

THE Parisians of all people in the world are the most appreciative, the most sympathetic, the most naïve. No wonder the "isms" of art are born somewhere between the Batignoeles and the Boulevard Montparnasse, for like the Greeks that Paul found in Athens they stand ready to lift to its pedestal any other new god. They dote on them. Initiation indeed there must be and a long and heart-breaking experience for the neophyte usually awaits him, but if there be a sportsmanlike persistence, a real belief in himself on the part of any eccentric, *that* usually settles the matter. They let him in. It is neither heresy nor with any attempt at facetiousness that the statement is made. The fact remains. It is so. It does not matter to the Parisian mind of what kind or quality the newness may be—if it incubates long enough in the Parisian atmosphere it is sure to catch. I challenge any one to point out any single-track mind persisting in his annual orbit that has not obtained recognition and often official recognition in France. It is the same experience the Scotchman had with his wife.

"The water drop wears out the rock,
As this infernal jade wears me:

I could withstand the single shock,
But not the continuity!"

The single shock of the never-tiring Henry Rousseau (the tax gatherer of the octoir at the gate of the city) was withstood for a quarter century, his works hidden away in the dark corners of even the *Salon des Refuses*, the butt of his companions in misery. But drop by drop the rock wore away. He could do no better nor no worse. He was simply his simple self.

I have seen at the great railroad stations of Paris men out of employ, ready to follow after a cab with a trunk on it. Block after block they race along following with a grim determination to meet it at its destination and get the job of lifting it into the house. I have also seen the occupant of the cab, in due time softened by the man's necessity and pluck, order it halted, take in the runner and give him a seat by his side. The case finds its exact analogy in the great heart of Art in the French metropolis. Henri Rousseau has been taken in at the Luxembourg!

It is a fair question to ask. Was the persisting opinion of the French wrong? and conversely, is the eventual and suddenly reversed opinion right?

Once the diploma is given out, however, the creators of opinion for the rest of the world fall in,—way in.¹

Though they may not be rated as art a fair example

¹Following Jan Gordon through several pages of rapture regarding M. Rousseau, he finally summarizes with a *but*—"but they are not works of art, because he had of necessity to use the only means of expression possible to him."

of what they are is included in the exclusive art museum of France. Truly the emotional and volatile French have a heart.

It is with a like altruistic and benevolent complaisance that France puts its arm around many another solitary. Being one's self in art is by far the safer rôle to play for the French passport to recognition than years of preparation to serious endeavor. There are so many who mistakenly take this latter route. *Types in art* being the thing that counts, the eccentric naturally stands out in the crowd and is easily identified.

The names of a lengthening list force their strifes and experiences upon the mind, each with its degree of right in its claim, each with its varied circumventions toward the goal. That the great heart of France has held the road thither, outclassing the great head of French artistic acumen, is quite as true, but no more to be wondered at than that this same head has made mistakes afore time in honoring those that the world is now willing to forget. This altruism should be forgiven to the French, but can it lay claims to a wider reception by other peoples; for France is the mother of the arts today and it is natural that she should stand by her offspring, but is the rest of the world called upon to adopt the children which she has nourished and brought up! Again the voice of Whitman exclaims, "O to propagate our own."

We can analyze the popular interest in the quaint forms of illustration of a century ago or of the efforts of the primitives of centuries before, and find it to coincide with that same feeling that we of the present

generation have regarding the popular plays of fifty or sixty years past.

What was at that time taken seriously on the stage is met today with peals of laughter when played with that serious spirit of aforetime. "Ten Nights in a Bar-room" has had in America an intermittent run for over half a century, with an increasing popularity as the humor of its platitudes becomes evidenced by comparison with present standards. The fact that this grade of drama was accepted as adequate and fit for sober tears, is what today brings tears of joy to the frequenters of crowded houses who are out for a good laugh.

It is a commiserative pity for the taste of our forebears which prods our interest in finding them thus innocent of our keener requirements. We enjoy that innocence—and pity it; and pity is akin to love.

Psychologically this becomes the basis of our interest in the work of children, or of the undeveloped adults of the ethnic nations. We are quick to register their effort to accomplish and as ready to sympathize with their defeat. Humor joins hands with pity and again pity is akin to love.

If there be a mistake in all this it comes about when we allow the mistaken emotion of pity to register too high.

To place the work of the *ingénue* in the category of real accomplishment in the visual arts is no less absurd than to mention "Ten Nights in a Barroom" or the dramatization of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in the same breath with a play by Barrie or O'Neill.

To mistake our emotion toward the art of Matisse,

Henri Rousseau, or Marie Laurencin with that evoked by Michelangelo, Delacroix, or Ryder, or permit the accomplished work of the standard painters of today to be classed therewith and viewed on equal terms is what has brought chaos into art values.

To introduce a nursery ditty into "Paradise Lost" or the "Divine Comedy" is no less a breach of normal taste than to attempt to classify a Modigliani or the childlike distortions of Picasso with Munkacsy's Christ before Pilate or a carefully searched portrait by Hawthorne or Holbein.

If the former make any appeal to the normal intelligence it must be through that accommodative spirit of benevolence with which a sympathetic mind approaches immaturity, willing to find in it the germ of what in time might develop.

If the followers of Matisse adopt his formula, insisting that they become as little children, their place is in that category, nor should they attempt to invade a higher.

Occupying the position of what in progenitive parlance is termed a "throw-back," they should join their link with primitive nations as a part of their slowly developing effort in realizing an ideal far above them, nor expect the world will take seriously the dogma that the beginnings of civilization by the wildest stretch of the imagination can be considered its culmination.

CHAPTER VII

MODERN ART A VOGUE

A REASON of the vogue for acquiring modern art, as explained by both collectors and museums, is that it is expressive of our own age.

Let us stop, however, and analyze the age and inquire whether in any degree or to any extent this age has to do with the spirit of art which would represent it. If not, we are then attempting to antithesize the proposition, yoking together two antagonistic elements: art, to an impossible subject.

If there is one controlling demand in this age it is that things shall be *different than they were*. Whereas horses had their points, the auto has more, for it goes faster; whereas the railroad was speedy, the airplane can outrate it and we toss our hats in the air and yell "Can you beat it?" Meanwhile the sage of Coniston, in opposing a railroad through the lake region where the stage coach had proved sufficient, declares: "Haste is incompatible with art." The remark is one of the greatest truths ever uttered by Ruskin.

We can't take art on the fly. It is a subject entirely for reposeful contemplation. How then can *this spirit* of our age be adjusted to the art idea!

But if speed fails what other of the differences of

our age may there be that should justify it? Fashion certainly is "different"; in fact fashion can only exist by being different, and so in its endless readjustments of style, sometimes it conforms to the demands of fitness and even beauty—and sometimes not, just at present, *not*. How then may be associated this characteristic of our age with art! Are we supposed to follow the smart-set publications and swallow their types and vagaries in feature and dress, the eight foot debutante of sunken eyes, suggestive of night clubs and hip flasks, as representative of our age to future generations, a distortion both moral and physical of our womanhood and a slander upon this section of the race. Yet modern art is doing just this and we are obliged to sit down with this sort of weekly and monthly magazine and either blind our eyes in revolt or accept the situation as a parent regards his fever-stricken child, knowing in time the malady will burn itself out. The caricatures which now crowd the pages of theatrical and even literary news are a grotesque, and mayhap, an amusing grafting of the "*difference*" idea, adding a feeble note of humor as an accompaniment.

To a lover of the art of caricature, a truly responsible and commendable art, this might prove an enlivenment to both the theatrical and literary reviews, but the weak debaucheries of this art which are handed out are offered in lieu of the real thing, the editors willing to let it go at that; the recommendation of the "different," being sufficient, under the acknowledgment that the real caricaturist is one of the geniuses of art met

with so rarely and on such high priced terms as to be beyond them. To the actress who declared she would sue the journal for the insult, came the remark from a *conseur*, "Let it go, dear: If you sue they will drop you—and, don't you know, no matter how you're treated it is all good advertising."

Compare this class with the wonderfully clever caricatures of Hindenburg and King Alfonzo by a master caricaturist. The line motive of the first is the quadrangle, the other, curvilinear; and on these basal forms unmistakable likeness ensues.

Yet another characteristic of our age is scientific investigation. We are not satisfied with the outer semblance, so frequently disclosing the soul within; but must probe beneath for matters of fact. We demand the acid test. We demand plans, specifications, we consider geometric formulas, we even dote on Einstein; and need not be surprised that Dynamic Cubism is the result, nor Brancusi nor Picasso.

Just here we come to a point, the only one, well taken on the premise that modern art represents our age. This strong leaning toward science and mathematical formula gives Cubism a partial warrant. Physical Cubism declares a reason for being, in Architecture and in Furniture, but has lesser justification in the graphic arts.

Here the foursquareness of Physical Cubism finds an extended hand and a simple and massive grandeur is the result. Private dwellings as well as giant buildings may conserve this formula to advantage and the interior furnishment of such architectural expression is

appropriate to it. The stolid principle of congruity here finds a stolid comfort. The newer designs of modern art in this important range are both artful and refreshing in their naïve simplicity. We enter such a room and smile a satisfied greeting with an exclamation: "This is all right." In this range of mechanized art let us freely admit that just here the age and the art coalesce.

Says George Moore, the Irish novelist, "I can tell you why I abandoned modern life as a subject. It seems too highly mechanized for art. A man walking or riding a horse is more human than a man driving a motor-car; a pack-horse on the downs is more human than a lorry. Somebody (I have forgotten his name for the moment) has prophesied that in two hundred years the world will have become so thoroughly mechanized that there will be no more art, music, or literature; in a word, that the Age of Art will be as dead as the dodo. This is but a prophecy. Airplanes are machines, and therefore outside the domain of art. Music has become mechanical too."

It appears then that Mr. Moore finds the inspiration which life contributes to the artist who would represent it, to be quite lacking in this day; that its thoroughly mechanized condition could naturally produce but a like result.

But to return to the question with which we started, we are obliged to inquire, how does this department of useful art extend any warrant to the *merely different* in graphic art; for the question to be answered was the assertion of such collectors as John Quinn and others

that their acquirement of modern art lay in the fact that it reflected the spirit of this age.

But modern art is hydraheaded and Matisse claims his place; Matisse, together with the ramifications on the master's doctrines. We then are obliged to inquire whether *his* formula fits into our age. Not by the most lenient spirit of accommodation or the wildest argument of its protagonists, for Matisse is a retrograde who would stop the onward trend of both thought and action in art and have us return to childhood and the childlike phases of art. With what possible accommodation can we ally our own dominating, materialistic, scientific spirit with the enfeeblement of form or with *intuition* in place of *reason*? Or under what pretext should an advancing age turn back to the beginnings of civilization and conclude that after all the start may as well be accepted for a finish? Our age is burdened with persons yearning for originality, with the concomitant obsession that their originality should be bequeathed to the race.

The assumption, then, that modern art finds countenance and patronage in the fact that it represents our age, scarcely holds as a reason, and forces us to look farther. Its justification has already been alluded to; the argument circles and finally alights on the other horn of the dilemma. After all, its real recommendation is that at any cost and in any way it is *different*. I consider this to be the final first cause of the great proportion of modern art.

Now the "different" is just that line of demarkation which establishes the severation which caste demands

Caste could not exist if all were alike. It asserts itself by establishing differences. The "smart set" must have smart clothes together with any other smart thing which fashion may suggest, and the smart magazine must depict this enviable quality in all of its features. Here finally art and the age coalesce. When, therefore, such a magazine publishes interior wall decorations and labels them "smart," what else-so-ere this be matters little. Is it likely that one of *the set* would have anything else when the house was "done over," or would have any other art than the "up-to-date?"

Mr. Phillips, in his "Art and Understanding," has quite honestly, unconsciously and inevitably exposed to view the machinery underlying this vogue in art and which plays so large a part in establishing the present tendency.

"The sudden reversal of taste in our period, the violent change of mode from Sargent to Picasso within fifteen years, is startling until we remember that there has been a steady stream of propaganda and publicity, the effects of which have been watched with keen intelligence until finally our subconscious expectations have been not only anticipated but produced at precisely the moment of our desire. At last we know what it is to be modern and what is to be our style for the first half of the Twentieth Century. Consciousness of a new style in art is like a child's consciousness of a new toy or a woman's awareness of a new gown or a man's of a new hat. Outfitted with a new mode in art, we find it difficult not to look upon those still satisfied with other styles as curiously old-fashioned. Art as it

was before Matisse and Picasso is interesting only for the museum and its relics."

In other words, Mr. Phillips would have our art prepared for us quite as are our styles in bonnets and gowns to be changed at short intervals; and the propaganda! Why surely, this is recognized as a necessity in any *business*.

With these means, experience has proved that it is possible to make any newness under the sun the vogue for vogue people. The keen remark of Albert Sterner is in point, "There is no such thing as Modern Art; there is art and there is advertising."

But another point in Mr. Phillips' pronouncement forces the question why the necessity of the "violent change from Sargent to Picasso?"

Here is the most damning indictment possible to the whole system of propaganda and quite on a par with the method of gang warfare: If a rival is in your way mark him for elimination. We find the method prevailing in the political ethics of the South Seas and frequently appearing in Mexico and South America. Among higher civilizations these drastic methods of attaining preëminence have given place to a live and let live agreement among rivals.

The assumption that Sargent and Picasso cannot survive together at the same period is also an assumption that the Anglo-Saxon race is of a one-track mentality, incapable of an art catholicism and willing to kotow to the dictators of "art style."¹ Unfor-

¹ Mr. Phillips continues, "Any painter working in a style which is neither formalist, nor supernaturalist, nor sensationally new,

tunately this expresses quite completely the attitude of certain collectors and museums, accepting only the last word, and blinded to the conception of what art is.

Said Frank Alva Parsons, one of the great instructors of art in this country, shortly before his death:

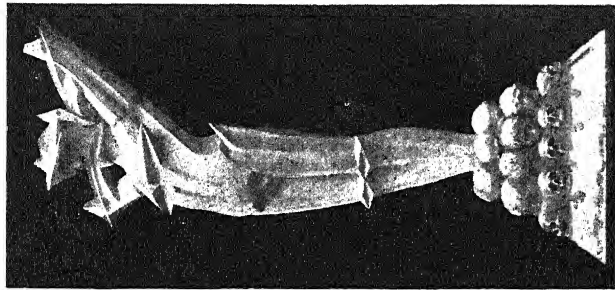
"The universal tumult stirred by the apparently strange and inexplicable phenomenon called "Modern Art" is gradually subsiding. Europe is calming down, recovering by degrees its balance and reason, instead of acting on pure impulse, and is thus playing a part in restoring the standards of nations to something approaching a normal state.

"The leading individual opinions here are influencing followers toward an understanding of the fundamentals of any art and of the great fact that since existence is evolutionary, each epoch growing logically out of the preceding art, which is but an expression of its period, must of necessity follow the same method of growth.

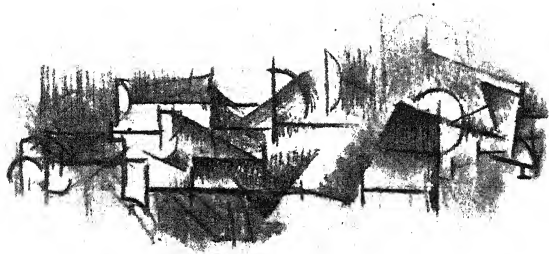
"The grotesque, bizarre and impractical, as well as ugly things made were not attractive to any save those with an insatiable desire for change, originality and sensation, at the expense of suitability, beauty and common sense.

"We can count on the urge for economic exploitation to cause the seizure of every opportunity to grasp and promote any idea seeming to have a money value.

is today as one buried alive. Cézanne was useful for a while. Now he is, in the words of Leo Stein, a 'squeezed lemon.'"

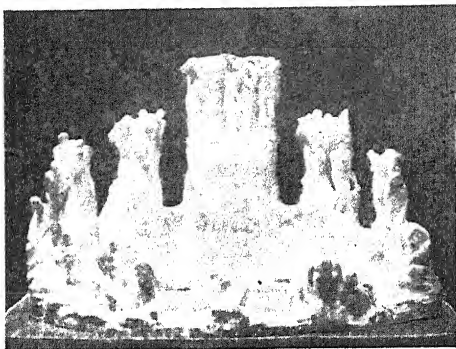


WAR — Hansen-Jacobsen

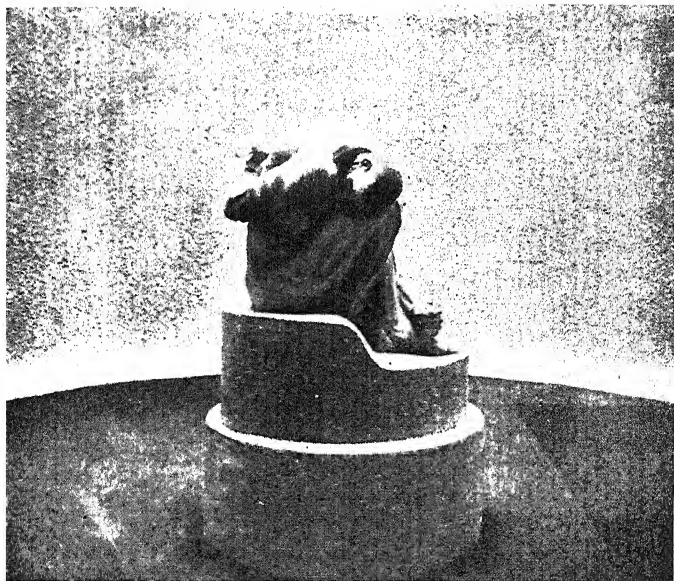


A WOMAN — Picasso

CUBISTIC EXPRESSION



THE DEUCALEAN — *Taft*



"THE EARTH" — *Franz Metzner*

WORKS EXPRESSIVE OF UNIVERSAL IDEAS

It was this economic octopus that saw in an apparently tired-and-hungry-for-thrills-and-sensations world an opportunity to make money. The "Modern Art Movement" seemed promising, at once became the center of action and, of course, the stuff was made—and sold!

"We hear much less of 'Modern Art' in Europe now. It is 'Contemporary Art.' The signs all point to a coming contemporary art, based on the sound foundation of suitability, practicability and beauty through simplicity, created without fear that someone may find a motif in construction or decoration believed to have been used in some period style or by some great man who was not born during the last half century.

"By and by we shall all learn that art is but the natural expression of prevalent tastes and ideals, but this expression to be sincere must be based on universal laws of suitability to purpose and of beauty or harmony in every detail of its material expression.

"The will to find such materials, forms and colors as will adequately express the needs of modern humanity is increasingly manifest. The knowledge that since progress is governed by fundamentals and that its art expression obviously must also be, is ever becoming plainer. As this state of consciousness develops, the earlier, cruder, more bizarre and less intelligent creations now called 'Modern Art' will give place to practical ones, in harmony with the laws of construction and decoration."

The points in the above to be stressed are that "the grotesque and bizarre appeal only to those with an in-

satiable desire for change" and that true progress in art can only be based on fundamentals.

The comment by Mr. Eugene Savage is in point as expressing a like conviction.¹

"We are exposed to this alternate fever and ague by the thinness of our æsthetic and cultural background. The same poverty of background permitted the foolish contention over the subject picture, whereas a grasp of fundamental principles would have shown that it is just as idiotic to say that a picture is not art because it tells a story as to maintain that it is art because it does not tell a story. A good subject for reflection lies in the contrast between the unhealthy violence and vapidness of some of our modern movements and the sustained, majestic sweep of *four thousand years* of beauty in Chinese art. With what mingled power and restraint that art fulfilled its different phases no one should need to be reminded. The Chinese never lost their fundamentals. It would be a providential dispensation if we could recover our own. This cannot be done with the ephemeral exhibition and the resulting war of idiosyncrasies and period style fragments as the prevailing objective, instead of the defined experiences in applied design that should be had in the schools, where, as in tradition itself, everything must be most rigorously pragmatic.

"Manifestly a syllabus of studies for training students in this manner has nothing to gain from the severely limited application of art practiced by the nineteenth century, nor will anything useful be found

¹ Extract from an address before the Carnegie Corporation.

in the vagaries and fantastic claims to genius by the lunatic coterie."

Dr. William A. Boring, Dean of the Art Department of Columbia University, in advocating a School of Art which should combine the literature of art with its practice says, "In time our achievements must surely be moulded to a nobler ideal. Our forms and expressions do not spring from spiritual impulses. . . . Our ideals are too cheap. We endeavor to find a short cut to achievement. The latest novelty in painting, sculpture and architecture is admired as a work of art if it is 'something different.' The University now teaches the history and appreciation of art, but this is less important than developing fine ideals and standards in creative art."

He then adds significantly, "The situation of art at present demands such a school with even stronger insistence."

I therefore decry a "vogue" in art, a fashion or a fad, and I condemn most heartily the statement of Mr. Phillips that "any painter working in a style that is not formalist, nor supernaturalist, nor sensationally new is today as one buried alive."

CHAPTER VIII

WHY DO WE CREATE ART?

"If the passion for creation be not accompanied by the critical spirit it will surely waste its strength." OSCAR WILDE.

THE answer is simple ; it is because we wish to communicate, a desire inborn in every living being. It commences early and is ever with us, but it wanes as our faculty for expression weakens and in time leaves us impotent.

This, of course, necessitates, first, that what we wish to communicate is communicable ; second, that we have the power to communicate with the means at our command ; and, third, that what is to be communicated is worth while to the person who receives the communication. The last point is added as a hint to such users of arts material as are satisfied to communicate to themselves alone. In literature I know of but one adventurer—Gertrude Stein—who was willing to set down a jumble of words she alone could understand ; but in graphic art there are those who have tried it and offer plausible reasons for producing art directed to their own comprehension, with perhaps a willingness that this may be shared by others.

The individual acceptance of any form of art must naturally be based on its appeal to us, not upon its pur-

pose. The aim of the artist may be largely to please himself, but do we necessarily care for this pleasure a man may take in pleasing himself? Unless his thought is worth while as communicable or even pleasurable to us as a novelty, what of it! That someone tells us we ought to like it can not produce the pleasure the work has failed to elicit.

Said John Cotton Dana, the most brilliant librarian that America has produced, after he had been placed at the head of the new museum of Newark, New Jersey: "I don't know what this new art stands for or is trying to do, but I buy it because I think I ought to." Here, then, is a perfectly honest confession of an unusually intelligent layman, who ventures to state over his own signature that he is willing to surrender his personal judgment to the keeping of someone else. May not this be the attitude of other museum directors and collectors of art who are willing to acquire the latest thing because they think they ought to?

We create art that it may represent for us a sentiment which nature or the imagination imposes upon us.

To discover the moving power which has produced the art of the various civilizations of the world it is only necessary to view those arts amid their present surroundings. The Sphinx and the temples of Thebes and Karnak stand as mute sentinels persisting in the guardianship of a lost faith, and from the Taj Mahal to the dismantled temples and the marvelous sculptured monoliths of Yucatan, one may catch the rebuke which speaks from the grandeur of a former day to those who now merely stare in wonderment and are im-

potent to continue the tradition. Can one look at either the existing achievements or these ruined miracles of a lost civilization without the conviction that by only one ruling emotion could they have been wrought, and that is faith; not only faith, but a passionate faith? Can we doubt for a moment that the impetus of the Renaissance came through the faith inspired by Christianity, that the *grade* of endeavor in this was the criterion set for the other contemporary works of that period? Whether pagan or Christian it matters not; the will to great achievement came through a living faith in something. If we ask what is the matter with art today, we may find the answer in the fact that we lack a dynamic faith; we therefore lack a subject able to inspire our greatest effort. As the inspirational worth of a subject diminishes, the product, as art, diminishes. The preëmption of the faith-impelling motif of Christian civilization, by the old masters, has left the artists who followed only a lessening enthusiasm for the subject lacking this. Great art has always been expressed through a great subject.

It is the misfortune of art today that we imagine the mine has been worked out, that there are no minor leads to be traced from the main lode. This, however, being acknowledged, how easy has it been for the "leaders" to tell us that art, instead of being a big thing, is, after all, today only a little thing, reduced in the final analysis to a dozen different ways of saying a thing. However interesting it may be to receive a message on a silver platter held by a liveried lackey, the æsthetic touch is but a passing gratification com-

pared even with that message dropped in our lap by a hurrying postman. For what really holds us is the message itself and what excites in us concomitant pleasure is the manner, the form in which it is conveyed; for "form is the manners of art." The shifts and vagaries of the latest trend are concerned almost exclusively with the *how*, an unconscious acknowledgment that they have nothing of importance to say.

The retention of great art or its revival narrows itself down for us in this latter day to what may be produced through sculpture or heroic painting, by which I mean that which contains a national or religious appeal. The religious appeal need not necessarily be of that order known to the Quinquecentists; it may be quite of today's kind and yet contain the spark of religion. It may express the brotherhood of man idea, and in that a truly moving faith may be inspired. This is the thesis of Tolstoy. It seems to me logical that the worthiest efforts of literature and painting should be this. But we may go further and see in the opportunities of patriotism, with its varied unfoldings of national service and aspiration, a sufficient basis for the deep emotion which art may build on. The great achievements of sculpture today have sprung entirely from this source.

We may as well admit it, the world will never approach the great art of the past for that simple lack of an inspiring cause. Faith in the unseen has been knocked out by the welter-weight blows of a scientific age. The plight of art today may be directly traced to the agnosticism and anarchism of the radical mind.

The "unseen" of today are merely fatuous experiments in the subconscious, unreducible by the processes of graphic art.

But lacking a soul-inspiring subject, is there nothing which may serve in its place; something that can be offered to the thousands now assuming art professionally, something which to their minds may *satisfy*, as worth while?

Next to love of God and country there is a love of Nature; but just here let us stop short and consider. The love of Nature has already served that purpose. Art has followed her with such faithfulness as was demanded by Ruskin, and in this devotion much more good was secured to the artist than to art.

The recoil from the Ruskin leadership need have been but a partial revolt. Ruskin said so many worthy things and said them so convincingly and sincerely that we may well go back to them and cull the good of it all. The great error of the Ruskin dogma was in holding up Nature for inspection by the microscope. True, he saw another point of view in construction, but he put the former first. We have now come to reverse this and in so doing have pushed Nature farther away, looking at her more fundamentally, summarizing rather than emphasizing. Nature should not suffer in this modern analysis. We might even accord her a greater respect, enthroned upon the buttressed plattform of design rather than at so close a range as to examine her with a lorgnette.

There may be denials that subject out of Nature has aught to do with art; that technique or quality too

may be quite dismissed and that art will survive. In the abstract this is so, the cook declaring that it is the subtle and very especial flavor of his own which makes the pudding. Without the base of the pudding, however, the flavor may as well remain in the bottle. That phase of modern art which strives to be all spirit, ignoring a foundation in natural fact, offers what is found to be a sauce without the pudding.

Bereft of an emotion, a sentiment, a phase of Nature such as a poet would mark, a yearning to put one's self in touch with the *mood* of a day, an impulse to awaken in a brother man a desire for service to country or kind, modern art looks about in helplessness for a text to talk on, and if she will perform, is offered either the mere shreds of a how-to-do, or a chance to interpret the esoteric vagaries of the human mind.

If we look for a reason for the barrenness of art of the modern it is emphatically that. It has so little to say.¹

Says Alexander Black: "Any theory that sets up a super-art, especially one that affects to despise life, is essentially evasive and dishonest. Logically it should begin with suicide. It is striking on the job—an intellectual sabotage. In a creed acknowledging a living art there is no place for irresponsible ecstasy, but there is room—there is demand—for the uttermost

¹ No reference is made to that large division of modern art which claims for its membership trained technicians who may make use of a simplified formula for the expression of ideas, largely in decoration, and who are as far removed from the Fauve type of "modern" as an Anglo Saxon from a Bantu or a Bunthorne.

triumphs of expression, for every individual thought and emotion which the common heritage of art-language may carry to mankind. Art will learn that keeping close to life is a condition of survival."

He continues: "We find Mr. Bell asking, 'Why should artists bother about the fate of humanity when rapture suffices?' In other words, it is only by *not* having meaning that form can have significance. I relinquish the task of discussing whether significance without association is a sane proposal."

Says Royal Cortissoz in his "Post-Impressionistic Illusion": "I must take the risk and state what after careful study I have gathered to be the Post-Impressionistic aim. It is to eschew such approximately accurate representation of things seen, as has hitherto been pursued by painters of all schools, and to cover the canvas with an arrangement of line and color symbolizing the very essence of the object or scene. For some occult reason it is assumed that a portrait or picture painted according to the familiar grammar of art, understood by all men, is clogged with irrelevant matter. The great masters of the past, to be sure, are not invalidated and they need not be sent to the lumber-room, but their day is done, and with the Post-Impressionists we must slough off a quantity of worn-out conventions before we can enter the Promised Land. The temptation to go deeper into the metaphysics of the subject is not, I admit, very strong, for I do not like to chew sawdust. . . . That is the nubbin of the whole argument. Post-Impressionism as a movement, as a ponderable theory, is an illusion."

The great body of artists, looking at the revolt among their ranks and scanning the departing column winding over the hillock, wave them a cordial farewell, quite convinced that after a sojourn for a while in the desert they will turn up again with convictions such as experience has made practical and with a view-point broadened because they have regarded their subject from several essential points of view.

It is not credible that this mutinied battalion is without reasons for mutiny. The validity of these reasons is another matter and is open to argument. For the moment, they believe in themselves, and especially in their leaders. It is the old story of what propaganda will do. The disintegration of the Italian army of the world war comes to mind. No one stops to argue propaganda—he takes it. Let this be augmented by a brass band and it is indeed a strong man who can resist the urge to join the procession, and so long as this stimulation is provided there are those who will keep on marching. But eventually the present *new* will have grown old, when suddenly these faithless pied-pipers will desert, and the throng of treasure-hunters gazing into the vacant hole of their Treasure Island will wonder why they left home.

But mark you, the search will not have been entirely fruitless. It will have proved an awakening opportunity. "Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits." They have seen new vistas; they have listened to new creeds; they have known freedom, and in sobered thought may be able to sift and utilize these privileges.

Meanwhile, may we not, we still remaining at the feast when most of the speakers have had their say and gone, hear yet some voice of cheer not only concerning the safety of the lost battalion, but of an awaiting victory ahead, in a cause which has always commended itself to the most devoted efforts of men. Let us become practical at this point and bespeak for art a purpose.

Those who would elevate art into the rarefied atmosphere of Olympus and know nothing of it but a beauty of form which shall appeal only to their æsthetic sense will surely see its death for want of oxygen. No organism can survive without a purpose for its functioning. The æsthete, associating thus closely with the gods, may taste his ambrosia and sip his nectar while pillowed in the clouds, dreaming dreams of serene aloofness under the belief that those beneath him may mistake him for a demi-god in this company. The mass of mankind, however, especially those in this present age of motion and emotion, are variously moved by the spectacle; some would throw bricks, while others merely call to him to come down, associate with his kind and discard his nectar and ambrosia for red meat. Art to survive must have a purpose.

CHAPTER IX

WHAT PRICE ART?

AT a recent exhibition of an interesting group of French "Moderns," including worthy examples of Monet, Pissarro, Manet, Degas and others was a small picture by Matisse of a saucepan containing two broken eggs, lying on a spotted cloth. These spots, the most attractive feature, were executed with scrupulous care for the most part, the artist's interest in them finally waning toward one side. The eggs had dark brown shadows and even to the uncritical eye of man appeared doubtful. There was nothing else in this picture of subject value.

A visitor, of fair acquaintance with Matisse, cast a reasonable interrogation at the canvas, but an artist friend dispelled his doubts, declaring, "Both signature and canvas are unquestionably Matisse's, for there is no living painter who could risk choosing so commonplace a subject or treating it in so commonplace a manner."

This expression in the ordinary did not have even the first requirement of graphic art—a design.¹

¹ It should always be kept in mind that *every* artist, and this includes even those who repeat the same formula year after year, is bound to vary in his work to the degree that he is temperamental and works emotionally.

The marketing of the trifles, experiments and studies of an artist of reputation is one of those iniquities which the avenging

On inquiring the price it was found to be \$5000, "and," said the salesman, "it is yet for sale, as an offer of \$4500 has been just refused for it." All of which prompts the inquiry: How comes it that this work lacking an appeal either in subject, color or design should be offered for \$5000; and why under the conditions should \$4500 have been "just offered" for it. It suggests an opportunity to look upon the inside of the picture business.

Let us appraise the components of the transaction:

Canvas	\$ 1.00
Pigment75
Frame	20.00
Signature	4878.25

The estimate on the pigment is liberal, as only earth colors were used—umber, sienna, ochre and white, with a touch of cadmium yellow for the yolks.

The person, then, who had just offered \$4500, unless practically or even æsthetically interested in eggs, doubtless felt that this sum minus \$21.75 was what he was willing to pay for a signature.

Granted that the party was a bona fide purchaser, how could he justify the selection of this as a *work of art*, to his wife, children or friends, except by the use of the plausible buncombe through which he was induced to buy it.

spirit doubtless longs to attribute to the low avarice of the unscrupulous dealer. Add to this the ease with which much of modern art may be forged and the appearance of many of the "penny dreadfuls" now put forth as modern art may be accounted for.

Any collector of autographs would assure him that the signature of Henri Matisse had a given commercial value, but no artist, connoisseur or dealer of honesty or intelligence could declare that the picture had any value without it.

The willingness of a certain caste of mind to assume satisfaction in acquiring gold bricks is one appealing more to the scrutiny of the psychologist than the author's ingenuity for solution. Barnum crudely hit upon it in declaring that the public liked to be fooled, which perhaps is true when it involves not more than half a dollar for a circus ticket, but Mr. Psychologist, how about it when thousands are at stake?

But the making of reputations is the important part of this inquiry. How is it done?

Doubtless nine laymen out of ten suppose that reputations grow at present as they did aforetime, but no, the process in these stirring times is all too slow. To a very large extent reputations are *made* by publicity. This means that the press must assist, and, as has already been stated, newness is the natural first cause of this. Whatever the press may say, however, is not nearly so convincing as what a painter's work brings at auction. This is the acid test. After all, money is the loudest talker. Now in Paris, the centre of the world's activity in art, the "Hotel Drouot," the great auction house of the French metropolis, holds the scales of reputation at arm's length in a pose, to all intents and purposes, exactly like that of blind justice.

The scales in many cases work truly and in that, the trend of art values may be ascertained; But let us

reflect but for a moment and it will become apparent what an opportunity this figure of justice presents for the creation of fictitious values.

Any coterie of dealers who may corner the output of an artist and elect to push him, agree among themselves on a set price for his works, usually according to size. The would-be purchaser may go from one gallery to another hoping to *do better* in acquiring an example of an artist's work, but he is always thwarted. The price is fixed, and furthermore he may be told that very shortly the prices will be advanced. Now, should any of the artist's canvases chance to appear at auction it becomes necessary to protect them, and this must be done, and of course by the dealers; in fact, if a work is bid beyond the current scale of gallery prices it becomes the best of arguments to the purchaser, a most convincing point for a *safe* investment.

Art dealers may or may not know art fundamentally or even critically. There are two distinct types in the picture trade and it requires but a few minutes' conversation with a salesman to know whether he is a real lover of art and knows the great scheme of it, or whether he regards it as a business, and that business is to sell pictures. But the one universal requirement the picture trade demands is that every one in an establishment shall have at his fingers' tips the prices which an artist's work brings at auction or from what price it has advanced. When this may be used favorably it becomes the turning point in many sales.

The booming of any artist's work is not a new thing, but on the basis that the price of a picture is

what some one will pay for it, values have naturally settled themselves, and the Hotel Drouot has for years assisted.

One case out of a hundred must suffice :

The work of Boudin, a thoroughly good tonal painter of the past generation, was felt to be worthy of pushing and it was therefore taken up by a group of dealers. He was a prolific painter of harbour scenes and landscape and was put under contract to produce canvases at a certain price to the trade. When it was found that there was a sudden rise in Boudins, owners of his pictures seemed willing to realize on them and they were sent to auction. They were of course protected out of the fund. But they kept on appearing and appearing and to the dismay and chagrin of the pool, the fund was exhausted and the prices slumped.

The same methods are back of much of the fictitious prices of today. They are precisely those of the stock market and when understood need not be a surprise to the layman who supposed business was business and that—well, art was art. On the contrary, while the stock market at least deals with realities, the values of the picture market are sometimes tentative, and occasionally fraudulent; the value, in other words, is not there any more than it was with the "Great South Seas Bubble," and the layman when prodded to buy what he cannot understand had better wait until he does understand it, or turn his attention to what he can honestly participate in.

The foregoing is in no wise a stricture against the

large majority of dealers in art. It is a statement of fact concerning certain coteries which have no scruples in creating fictitious values.

The following, republished by the *Art Digest* from the New York *Sun*, is in point in this argument :

FICTITIOUS AUCTIONS

How the prices of "advanced" paintings are raised artificially, and a vogue created for the works of a particular painter is explained in a public protest made by the French Association of Art Critics, according to G. H. Archambeault of the New York *Sun*. It shows that fictitious sales are held, bids raised to high figures, but no money changes hands because in reality there is no purchaser. This dispatch was the topic of an informal discussion at a recent meeting of the National Academy of Design in New York.

"Until recently," wrote Mr. Archambeault, "there was no means of knowing whether an auction sale of modern paintings was real or fictitious, but, now there is a law which gives a *droit de suite* (literally 'right to follow') to the heirs of an artist whose works are sold. This *droit de suite* in art is akin to copyright in literature, a certain percentage of the purchase price going to the heirs of the painter.

"In 1926 an 'advanced' painting by the man now known as 'Douanier' Rousseau was reported to have been sold at auction in Paris for 500,000 francs (\$20,000). . . . When it was reported in the newspaper that a work by Rousseau had been sold for half a million francs, the widow prepared to exercise her *droit de suite*, whereupon she was informed by the auctioneers that the sale was fictitious and that there had been no purchaser. She brought suit and the case is yet to be tried.

"Now the Association of Art Critics learns that probably there will be no trial at all, for the defendants have decided to pay the legal percentage, as if the sale had been real. It points out that the civil suit has dragged so long that any criminal action is precluded under the statute of limitations. Consequently it decided to publish the facts and to enter its protest against such practices."

Now the question, from which "value" was a digression, is, by what *influences* was the person persuaded that this canvas by Matisse was worth \$4500. It opens the very pertinent and important subject of paid propaganda, one of the disgraces which has recently insinuated itself into the art business.

In its issue of January, 1930, the *Art Digest* refers to those "publications which manufacture and sell publicity," a remark which might reasonably jolt the innocent bystander who received most of what he knows about art and artists from these sources.

To the profession this is far from being "news," since but a few years back rates as to *space* were sent, unsought, to artists—so much per front page, so much inside, with the understanding that not only special articles might be written, but that the amount should also cover the notice of the subscriber's exhibits in current shows. That these advances were repudiated, with but few exceptions, by the profession at large, turned the scheme over to the adventurers in art and opened the door to dealers interested in putting over whatever class of goods they chose to handle.

Let us not bear uncharitably upon this effort toward

survival, but it somehow recalls the *bon mot* of Tom Reed, the beloved czar of the Senate, "An honest politician is one who stays bought."

With this pressure upon the world of art today, it is not surprising to read of the intermittent appearance of yet another genius, or of marvelous "finds" in old masterdom, or of the works by artists of repute, now dead.

The combination of these joint influences in the manufacture of both reputations and products of art, warrants the assertion that no business of any sort, in any place on earth, is honey-combed with greater rottenness than is the art business in both this country and Europe. The reason for, and the latitude permitting this, is obvious. Whereas the values of commodities may be checked up on the prices current, in art there are three distinct possibilities of prices beyond the intrinsic value. There is the sentimental value, the fictitious value of unscrupulous advertising and the value of a possible rise, all of which may be played by the seller.

It is well for the innocent layman to know these things. It is well for the directors of museums to know them; laymen for the most part, with interests remote from the qualifications which judgments in art demand. The picture of such a group selecting purchases for their institutions, with no other expert on hand but the dealer personally interested, and with no thought of obtaining disinterested opinions from disinterested sources, would be amusing were it not pathetic.

What price art? The question is fraught with considerations worthy of thought.

Says Arthur Miller, art critic, in a 2,000 word article headed "Light Shed on Art Scandals":

"Ten years from now Europe will admit that America leads the modern world in art just as she leads in industry and finance." So said a great collector of ancient and modern paintings to me recently, adding: 'We already are producing the great art of today.' See Appendix; European opinions.

"The collector pointed out, however, that Americans would continue to worship at ancient or modern foreign shrines, so ingrained is our feeling of cultural inferiority where art is concerned. . . .

"Why, if it be true that we lead the world in art—a reasonable proposition—should cults other than our own art dominate the field so markedly?

"There is no simple answer to this important question but there are many contributing factors which, put together, give us a composite answer worth considering.

"The art market today is highly commercialized and complex. Where once men with a flair for art opened galleries and sold paintings that looked good to them for reasonable sums, the higher reaches of the trade are today the stamping grounds of a few astute, ruthless, wealthy individuals and rings who have learned how to extract unholy profits by playing on the snobbish instincts of the elderly rich American. . . .

"Many of these dealers turned to the French product. In modern business we are accustomed to see ad-

vertising campaigns conducted by the manufacturer from which countless dealers will benefit. Paris has learned that trick. Dealers, artists and speculators there raise large funds for critical propaganda and various artists in turn are boomed in books and magazines. These are interestingly written and illustrated. The artists are brought to our doors in print and reproductions and the newspaper writer finds a fund of interesting human material of æsthetic jargon to draw upon.

"All the way through the 'art game,' as dealers call it, one sees that price and publicity are interrelated. The old master field is the seventh heaven and here the publicity is different in tone and calculated to impress the older, more cautious buyer. Instead of smart young cosmopolitans with a *Vanity Fair* touch doing the writing, learned German experts who can write a fat volume on 'An Unknown Painting by Angus McWhirter,' fire the big publicity guns in this war. Catalogues, brochures, superb books, histories, pour off the presses, all written by experts, and as *The Art Digest* points out, 'somebody' pays for them. Undoubtedly many of them are not half as disinterested as they look.

"In the West we have not seen so many old masters, but, because we are far from the main market, we get some curious sidelights on the trade. Dr. Ernest L. Tross disputed several pictures that hung in the San Diego Gallery of Fine Arts, works that bore sonorous authentications by experts. Reginald Poland, the gallery's director, replying in a letter published in the

Times, to the *Tross* statement that the museum contained a Velasquez that was no Velasquez, said that the picture in question was under consideration for purchase for the museum and that Dr. Wilhelm R. Valentiner of Detroit believed it to be an early Velasquez. The museum did not buy the picture.

"I am now informed from a reliable source that the picture was recently sold to a woman in the Middle West as 'an early Spanish painting' for a sum said to be about \$1300. This is a poor price for any sort of a picture, let alone a possible Velasquez, which should be worth from \$75,000 up. This is only one of several pictures that have appeared in the West with similar attributions and the question in more than one mind is, would the learned doctor—who occupies a key position in the old master field of America—have given such an opinion if these works were to have been offered to New York buyers? In other words, is there one kind of certificate for the central art market and one for 'the sticks'?

"There are then huge profits and inducements in art for speculation and these are made possible by copious and clever publicity. If our own art, probably the most vital in the world today, certainly the most important to us, is to get the proper public attention, it must counter-attack with publicity. Meanwhile, if a few more scandals crop up some of our rich folk may decide that contemporary American art offers a cleaner collecting field than the crop of restored, repainted wrecks that, shining with new varnish, represent the old masters in so many private and public galleries."

Dr. Valentiner declares: "Only he that does not see the extraordinary break in history caused by the war, by its antecedents and its consequences, can expect that art, this mirror of the nations, will continue in its normal way as it did during the preceding generations. Only a superficial observer doubts the sincerity of the artist who proves his individuality by his very wrestling with the problem of his period."

It becomes then a fair question to ask if the purchase of an immense canvas by the modernist Chirico, for the Detroit Museum, depicting gladiators in a Roman arena, was justified on this basis. This shows the attempt on the part of one to rescue a fallen companion from a lion who is proceeding to maul him.

The lion in question has the haunches of a cow above which swings a bovine tail, the rest of the anatomy comporting. The mouth smeared with milk assists an idea of foaming fierceness. The gladiators are executed in a kindred child-like suavity. The query is, was the purchase justified on the basis of the "artist wrestling with the problem of his period"; or may not a more probable reason be devised in the practical suggestions of the dealer anxious to unload these foreign absurdities in exchange for American dollars.

CHAPTER X

ASTONISHMENT IN ART

"On my soul, Brown, I believe you would be wiser, if it doesn't incommode you too much, to stop short of greatness."

SIR JAMES BARRIE.

A POPULAR and successful teacher once told the writer that in order to keep an edge on his class he made use of the device of using a word or term carrying with it a degree of mystery; employing this quite incidentally under the supposition that everyone understood it. Each year he sprang a new mystery and found it to be just that question-mark in the ordinary flow of criticism that kept alive what might prove a flagging enthusiasm.

There is a deep psychology here. The average mind feeds on the elusive, the indefinite and the mysterious, a fact only too well known to those writers who must at all hazards impress and hold the reader.

Mystery and the elusive are good ammunition and serve their purpose of arrest and inquiry, but complete attention is assured only by the bomb. Astonishment can alone attain the front page.

The prophet who dares to enter the king's chamber, fix him with his eagle eye and denounce him in the

presence of his court and then stalk out before his bewildered retainers, is the only sort of prophet that can claim any standing in Israel.

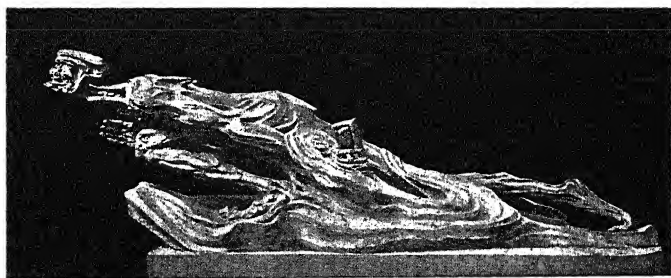
Authority needs only to assume boldness; that is its prerogative—and boldness confirms authority. So the hectic enthusiast rushes in with the torch. This was no casual gesture; how much greater than that of the hero who merely would burn Rome. The edict applied not only to London town but to the museums of the world.

When this "hysterical" set out from his lodgings with matches in his pocket, and oil rags concealed about his person, and headed for the Museum, he was in a fair way to add to his renown in the manner of the young man who achieved notoriety by burning the temple at Ephesus. Admiration is due him for the attempt. It was bold; it was brave; but the sight of their hero being apprehended by a casual London "bobby" must have doubtless proved an anticlimax to "the crowd."

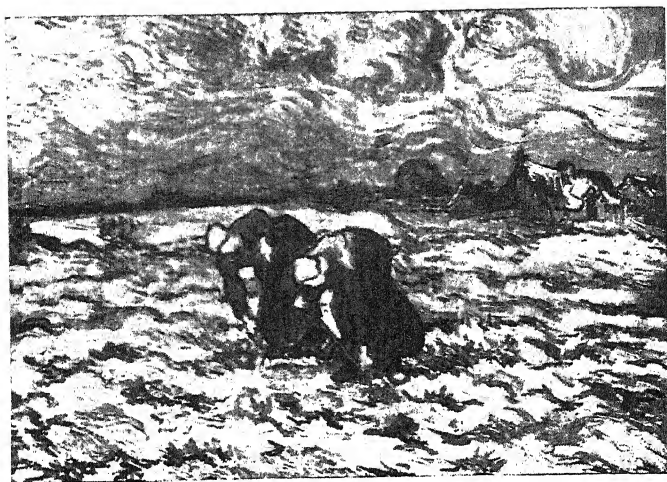
Mr. Bell, after sufficient association with the "Lofty Talkers" of the sacred groves, has at length spoken. With folded hands he has sat in quiet meditation of Art's mountain and yearned to reach its "white peak." This long cherished and laudable desire became a reality when he suddenly decided that the only trail led through "significant form." True to practice as a cautious inventor he guarded his secret. He published no guide of the trail—but he set the art philosophers thinking. They all sat up and noticed. Mr. Alexander Black, one of the keenest minds in American literature,



EUPHEMIA — *Jacob Epstein*



THE SHADE — *Hansen-Jacobsen*
POST IMPRESSIONIST SCULPTURE



POTATO GATHERERS — *Van Gogh*



IDYLL — *Gauguin*

POST IMPRESSIONISM CONCERNED WITH RHYTHMIC LINE,
DESIGN AND PRIMITIVE EXPRESSION

thrusts his rapier through this at many points. But one must suffice. He says:

"Mr. Bell tells us that the 'Cold white peak of Art' is reached in 'significant form.' This need not be startling to the profane outsider until he learns what Mr. Bell means by significant form. We are told that to be significant, form must mean nothing that can possibly bear a name, or that in any way can be associated with anything else.

To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of æsthetic exaltation.—We are lifted above the stream of life.

"Nothing thinkable is to be represented," remarks Mr. Black.

Every sacrifice made to representation is something stolen from Art, in fact we require nothing but sensibility. Recognition of a correspondence between the forms of a work of art and the familiar forms of life cannot possibly provoke æsthetic emotion. Only significant form can do that.

Mr. Black continues :

"You will guess that all so-called works of art that tell anything except the sheer ecstasy of the artist are here brushed aside for good and all. If you *recognize* a single trace, the jig is up. Beholding a painting by

Ingres, for example, Mr. Bell perceives human beings. Thumbs down for Ingres. Says Mr. Bell:

We do not see the figures as forms, but we immediately think of them as people.

Horrors! people. I am concerned at the moment not with Mr. Bell's innocent plea for an irresponsible æsthetic joy, but with the brisk way he scampers up his cool peak with that word 'art'."

Meanwhile Roger Fry, wearied with his position of a minor prophet, rose to a larger rôle with a Titan's thunderbolt hurled at the Greek antique. One day he discovered it to be a secondary consideration as compared with the negro art of the Congo.

Of course, in this astonishment rôle nerve is a prerequisite, but only for the first throw, for as Ulysses remarked to Achilles, "All with one consent praise new born gods, though they are made and moulded of things past." (Troilus and Cressida.)

However, it might be claimed that the author was sincere and prefers the company of negro art to that of the disciples of Phidias—which only awakens the greater astonishment.

Nor must we fail to put into this category the author of that book, "Apples and Madonnas,"¹ wherein an apple painted by Cézanne is made to outclass as a work of art a Madonna by Raphael.² The purpose is apparent. It is a jolt which forces out of the rut of tradition the opinion of the centuries—only, however,

¹ J. C. Bulliet, author of the work.

² Lessing says, "Raphael would have been as great a painter without his hands. His art lay in his conceptions, not in technique."

to leave it in the ditch. Let us applaud the originality of the attempt, and then straightway rescue it from the ditch.

Walter Pach, also yearning for the rôle of a major prophet, would now rid Art's temple of its parasites, overturning the tables of the money-changers of academic art with the whiplash of "criticism." He too proved himself duly astonishing, quite so in evidence in this bit of writing as to assure any but the most indulgent readers that his vaudeville stunt was naught but a notoriety pose. The estimate of Dr. Albert Barnes in an article on "Art Teaching that Obstructs Education" says in conclusion: "In short, Mr. Pach's real achievements have been to give an elaborate pseudo-scientific dressing to platitudes, and to substitute for æsthetic perceptiveness and comprehension a mystical adoration of the great names of painting. His judgments on specific painters are not based on objective plastic facts, and the hollowness and vapourousness of his abstract principles are suffused with the emotion which he knows so well how to pour about them in order to make them impressive."

Although astonishments in art may be met with in any of the shops setting up examples of the latest things, where distortive originality is at a premium, one's quest for thrills receives an unusual reward in beholding the self-portrait of an artist done à la Modigliani. Such was published, evidently with the artist's consent, in an art magazine. This result is quite possible by substituting a concave mirror in place of the one in the dressing-room.

This portrait, therefore, exhibits the features of the artist with lengthened nose, contracted forehead and eyes and sloping shoulders, altogether in line with the formula the Creator followed in the making of apes. The contemporary generation will deal indulgently with this amusing effort to be original even at one's personal expense; but what of following generations, the descendants of Uncle Alfred Maurer. Will they not have reasons to believe this "throwback" looks a bit serious for the opponents of the Darwinian theory?

A suitable astonishment following a long season of thrills was the inclusion in the galleries devoted to modern art of retrospective groups by Eakins, Homer and Ryder.

The surmises of the public were varied. Representation having been declared "dead" by the makers of modernism, this gesture was taken to mean a probable belief in the general doctrine of the Resurrection.

Or was it a bold claim that, after all is said and done, these men were quite germane with the purpose and principles of the new movement and should be accorded room in the synagogue? The same advance, be it remembered, was made to Ingres, Corot and Delacroix in the Armory show of 1913, safe stepping stones set down where the current ran high.

A glance, however, at the facts of the case should dispel this conclusion. Let us imagine the more forcible of the three, Thomas Eakins, dropping in out of the Hereafter and finding himself displayed in the same gallery that contained but shortly before the works of makers of modern art, their ghosts still

haunting the place; the naivetés of Matisse, the patterns of Picasso, the puerilities of Rousseau, the crudities of Soutine, the enigmas of Marin, the clumsy outlines of Cézanne, the bad dreams of Max Weber, the paper dolls of Marie Laurincin, the toppling walls of Manhattan, the hobby horses and milk-fed lions of Chirico.

Beholding himself allied with this company, the only ejaculation possible to Eakins would be, "O! Hell." ¹

For Eakins was first a scientist and after that an artist. He began far back and stalked his quarry from the start of its trail. He was as well delighted to wield the scalpel as the brush. His pupils divided their time about equally with the dissecting room and the life class. We became trained anatomists over the remains of humans, dogs and horses. He believed in the photographic, to the extent indeed that he prepared his own paper and chemicals, did his own printing and photographed his subjects before painting them. His demand for an outline was inexorable, but he found this by starting from the centre and adding bit to bit until it was logically found. His detestation of anything not implicitly naturalistic allowed no freedom with color, no possibilities in the shadows for reflected lights with what he called "fancy color." He believed in the integrity of nature, and that nature as she was would stand all the demands which art could make.

¹ As a pupil of his I feel a certain confidence in thus interpreting his mood. Doubtless, the only amendment he would make would be to add to it.

He therefore was one of the most thoroughly "representational" artists in America, believing in the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The next, Winslow Homer, was of more flexible fibre, but with a philosophy practically akin to that of Eakins. He did not simplify save where *pattern*, which came to him toward the end, demanded this. His art, though broad in outlook, was never universalized but rather an emergence from illustration from which he started. He conceived men and women in a natural environment.

Ryder had the larger outlook of the three. His kinship was with poetry—his natural companionship Inness, George Fuller, Blakelock and Homer Martin. With him poetry came first, just as with Eakins it was science, or with Homer illustration, representation. But poetry demands synthesis, and together with this the surface was as precious to him as the form to any great lyrist, the surface, from which one may penetrate through to the essence beneath, the surface, suggesting that "far in" quality which George Eliot asserts in the mark of the great writer. With Ryder this was on a par with what Sir Joshua pronounced to be like plum cake—good enough to eat.

Where, one would naturally inquire, is there a counterpart, or even an approach to this in modern art?

To him the flat, thin covering of color scarce lasting to the edges of their spaces would appeal as only a phase of dishonesty or the superficial efforts of the naturally wearied or incompetent.

The three look lonely in this company. To include them, therefore, naturally gives rise to the question why are they here? Is it the spectacle of the captured enemy ending the procession, tied to the chariot wheels of the conqueror; or mayhap an offering dropped in the coffer of the Saint for his blessing on a lottery ticket; a song and dance of freedom concluded by a doxology; or the sober thoughts of the morning, after a night off?

Whatever answer might be vouchsafed, it will still remain one of the astonishments with which Modernism has enlivened the dull matter-of-fact world of art.

A final astonishment emanates from this same source. In a note on Picasso in a catalog of the Museum of Modern Art we read; "As an inventor Edison pales into thin air beside him." This naturally brings a smile to the lips of the reader, but think of the tears of mirth to the artist!

Let us give full credit to this modern tendency in its effort toward new discoveries, in its determination to blaze new trails and open new vistas beyond. That it leads us into the thick underbrush and leaves us there, or gracefully backs out and pushes on afresh, as perchance we may accompany that determined adventurer Picasso; or whether it adopts new formulas in the hope that they may develop truth as with Matisse and fails as signally as he has; nevertheless any fair-minded reviewer of an effort to widen the course of art should acknowledge at least a respect for that effort.

Save in but few cases, the artists of the new view-

points do not inveigh against traditional art, the art of the masters of the Renaissance and those who followed. It is the critics such as Marietti who interpreted Futurism and Synchronism, the stock writers of the modern press and the dealers of the "new" (the "vital" and "living" art), that reduce controversy to mud-slinging.

The minor prophet usually contents himself with the surprises of Little Jack Horner. He puts in his thumb and pulls out "the plum," and holding it up for the amusement of the crowd, is sufficiently satisfied if the crowd admits his claim—"What a brave boy am I!" The Little Jack Horner type of criticism, however, is apt to defeat itself in the eventual thought of the comparative size and responsibility of Jacky.

Did Don Marquis thus wonderfully epitomize the case without due observation?

One tempts me now, a not uncommon type,
The Pseudo-Wit, with which the time is ripe,
Quick to pick up the current catch or phrase
And share applause by citing it with praise.
The trait that wakes to wonder and to mirth
Is Pseudo-Wit's attempt to judge the earth;
To pose as critic, give, withhold a crown
Or, swelling, strive to drag a great name down.
Yet anxious most of all to make his own
A courtier place beside the current throne.

In this revolution in art the opportunist springs up just as inevitably as in any other revolution. He is on hand today as were the Robespierres, the Marats

and the Dantons of a former time, and occasionally a Napoleon is produced. They all seek to make capital out of the disturbance, and if one pierces below the surface he may frequently find it is the *ego* and not the *cause* which is the real motive—and the cause serves moderately well.

What art is bleeding and dying for is coöperative thinking between the artist and the public, between the artist and his critic, and between the critic and the public.

The sledge-hammer as a means of annihilation, conviction and conversion must give place to means much less noisy, more logical, more sane, and more truthful. Hypothetical vagaries reared upon foundations of sand or slush are unworthy of the 20th century. They served barbaric ages and the ethics of the cave man.

In George J. Cox's excellent volume, "Art for Students," after reviewing quite at length examples of "metaphysical balderdash, dynamic phrasings in stupendous praise, or condemnation, or vaporous apostrophies of art and its creators," concludes: "Some critic of acknowledged eminence should be employed at public cost to make out a Liber Prohibitorum of all such tomes as remind one of Pope's comment on the 'critic's eye'."

He continues: "Some invent symbols upon which they play with a persistence of an adolescent enamoured of a saxophone. Others show a papal infallibility, more amazing than convincing. Yet others are sterile æsthetes who will never bridge the chasm which separates the layman from the artist."

"What psychologist will attempt to measure the æsthetic content of these thrills? An indifferent ikon raised above the head of superstitious peasants constitutes a work of art; or the fossil egg of a dinosaur would rank the same could Brancusi be induced to sign it and display it on red plush.

"Thus we discover nebulæ in the midst of apparently solid and scholarly critiques. We even encounter, as in the case of Degas and Matisse, the excruciating spectacle of the critics' chastely wrought theories upon the artists' method of expression, riddled by the words of the artists themselves.

"Thus the farther we push on the more obscure it seems, 'a cloud of critics, of compilers, of commentators, darkening the face of learning'." Truly this has become an age of Astonishments in art.

Progress is little else than the thoughtful elimination of what the collective mind discovers to be either practically useless or practically wrong.

Art has advanced through both of these tests from the efforts of primitive man to that of the primitive artist, from early Egyptian and Chaldean art to that of Giotto, from Giotto to Cimabue, and through the great expanse of the Renaissance on to David, thence to Delacroix and beyond to Manet, Monet, Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, Kandinsky, and finally Dada, who at its culmination epitomized progress as a joke.

In glancing at this brief list of those influences which have marked the turns and trends in the progress of the art idea, moulding its philosophy and directing its methods, it might be interesting to have the findings of some arbiter of art expressed fifty years hence in such a chart as indicates the rise and fall of the stock market. Even today it would not be impractical to essay such a chart; and would it be an assumption to place the apex at the Renaissance and from that allow the minor apices to be argued out under a pragmatic hypothesis. It is a fair question to propound: In seeking to improve art from its exalted position under the minds and hands of Titian, Veronese, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Leonardo and Rubens, have we been able to force up the apex or succeeded only in creating a collection of lesser ones?

If progress signifies dissatisfaction in what exists, has the demand to have things different accomplished anything more than the production of *variety*? Man's incessant demand for this is as cosmic as the many other cravings of his animal and mental make-up. This, however, is entirely outside of the problem of progress and can affect it only as an incidental happy chance. The plain question to the innovation is—have the major and animating purposes and privileges of art been strengthened or not under the modern renaissance? To use the searching category of Emerson, are not its sponsors in the class of "contemporary rather than eternal men."

A final moment to sift the gold of Modernism from

its dross. The larger nugget is simplification: It has entered art to stay. The second is the synoptic symbol bifurcating through the varied categories of the allegorical, the naïve and the humorous. A third is freedom in color with a release from convention, but in no wise a freedom from principle.

From the follies, the fantasy and frills surrounding a modern endeavor these three have emerged. The advancing generation has grasped them,—the *cestus* of the classic athlete strengthening wrist and hand, insuring the more virile blow. With these real aids the *robustos juvenes* of our newer generation may yet raise the art of tomorrow to a higher power.

APPENDIX I

WHAT EUROPE THINKS OF AMERICAN ART

SOME little time ago I casually mentioned in a lecture, a remark by the French Sculptor Rodin, "There is now going on in America a Renaissance more important than that of the 15th century in Europe, only the Americans do not know it." After the lecture, inquiries were pressing concerning this statement, in every case accompanied by surprise. I assured the questioners that the remark was not only true, but that I could quote a number of other opinions by foreign artists and critics which might surprise them quite as much. It was plain to see, as far as that particular group of people was concerned, that those nineteen words, spoken by a great art authority, had bulled the American art market.

The same magic word was uttered by no less an authority, but this concerning the work of a particular

artist, George Inness. It was the French painter, Benjamin Constant who touched with his wand the sleeping reputation of Inness and it at once awoke in the hearts, not only of the American people but of European critics and collectors as well.

But Constant again struck a clarion tone which rang out with no uncertain sound at a dinner given to the masters of Paris by the American Art Association of Paris, a pronouncement which was received with a slight wave of incredulity by Parisians and Americans alike. It was in 1891 that he prophesied, "In fifty years the centre of the world's art will be in America, probably in Chicago." 44 years have elapsed; there are 6 in which to turn prophecy into fact. An initial step was taken some years ago, when the Collectors' Association of America arranged an exhibition of Foreign and American art, so hung that every other canvas was native or foreign. The even quality of this display was frankly conceded by every collector of exclusively foreign paintings. This comparative judgment has been maintained through a term of more than twenty-five years by the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburg in its annual International Exhibition provided with its International Jury.

The statement of John W. Beatty, the organizer and former director of these exhibitions is, "The Composite opinion I received after many years, of the judgment of the foreign members concerning the work of the American painters is most gratifying. They certainly, one and all, placed a very high estimate on American art. I think they felt it to be both vital, and

even brilliant—a *key somewhat above the average European work.*”

Said Laura Knight, one of England’s most virile painters, a member of an International jury at Pittsburgh; “I am amazed at American Art. I had no idea of its scope. I am going home to tell my people about it, and what it signifies in the world’s art.”

A most remarkable concession and one which came from Professor Stitinnius of Berlin at a time when America held the fate of Germany in the balance during the recent war, was included in a pamphlet addressed to Professor Brander Mathews who had put German assumption, as to super culture, into its proper place. This brochure claimed precedence for about everything; but pausing before the subject of art, the writer affirmed, “Right here it might be interesting to state as a matter of fact, that since the famous Barbizon School (Corot, Diaz, Dupré and Millet,) and the great modern Dutch painters, Israels, Mauve, Maris, etc., have died out, the mantle has fallen on the shoulders of the American artists (quite a compliment to such a young nation) and in the present art movement the artists of the United States of today, *as a community*, rank perhaps the first in the World of Art. But did not the best of them study in Munich?” Just here we might interpolate to say: they did not, only a few, and William M. Chase, the most notable of these, remarked, “I had to go to Paris to get the damn German influence out of my system.” “By those well posted in art circles,” the writer continues, “it will be admitted that Germany’s rank is second.”

Another opinion may be quoted from Professor Valentin, of Berlin, but for a number of years associated with our Metropolitan Museum, and at present Director of the Detroit Museum and who, having travelled extensively over America has had opportunity to appraise our art as a whole. This deals largely with our prominent painters and sculptors and is too long to quote in this brief sketch. The unhesitating frankness of his appreciation for the originality, scope and promise of American art, as a trained observer of the World's art, and one held as an expert of a number of schools, is such as to remind us that in any broad survey of art, racial lines are swept from its tablet and that only counts which rises above the surface of this levelling process.

Another foreign artist, the Sculptor, Ettore Cordini, after a residence in New York of eight years was moved to inaugurate a series of mutual exhibitions in Italy and America backed by the Brooklyn Museum and the Italian Government. In this connection he said, "I believe American Art will soon be a strong and important factor in education and world civilization. On first coming to America, I was surprised by the importance of American art, which is not known in Europe as it should be. I consider its architects the best in the world, and some of their buildings are real specimens of the modern style. As a sculptor I admire much of the modern sculpture here and find in this department that the women are as strong as the men. Art is developing at the same rate as the progress of industry and commerce."

In an Editorial from "II Giornale d'Italia," upon the International Exposition at Rome, entitled "The Strong Peoples," the writer says "I really do not know what other name could be given to the Anglo Saxon people whose art is like the reflection of their good government and their solid moral organism. Their artists all have not only a great moral conception, but also the practical one that in order to be a painter it is important to learn to paint."

The writer continues; "When coming out of the rooms of the American pavilion you have the feeling of respect imposed by respectable persons. It is an honest people producing honest art. It is a strong people producing calm art. It is a people seeing its aim and knowing how to reach it without artificial exaltations. It is the triumph of good government reflected in art."

"La Vita" of Rome declares "North American Art has a strong characteristic of its own. It is a sane and solid art. These works are rendered by the American artists with manly and noble exuberance; in no wise by nervous, exalted or sick people. They are the kind of people who use the brush with the same dexterity as the oar."

Said the late Léon Bakst during his recent visit to America. "It is this dare-devil originality which has made the one art which is America's specific contribution to the art of our century—something superb and unique—which the world has never seen; and but for America may never have seen—I mean American architecture."

Jean Galerou, the French critic, writes, "I expect nearly everything from American artists. When with closed eyelids I see beyond horizons, I am strongly aware that an astounding epoch is in fermentation there, and I realize that no longer the inheritance of Greece will remain to the French only."

Henri Matisse, during his short stay in America, and having viewed a few of our museums remarked, "An American artist should learn his *metier*, develop his faculties and work in America. He can learn it in New York as well as anywhere in the world; better in some respects. Consider how much fresher are the subjects for a painter in this country, the scenery, the architecture, the people. Let him go to Paris for occasional visits, but an American artist should express America."

Said the late Sorolla, while visiting this country during his exhibition which turned the heads of the hosts of art loving New Yorkers toward the Spanish Museum, "I realize, as I look about me, that in several points I am outclassed by what I frequently encounter here."

The recent Exhibition of American Art at Budapest elicited the following comments:

"America today has in nearly every respect a peculiar significance different from any other and is characterized in everything by the superiority of wealth and the courageous élan of youth. It has the force and courage of initiative with all requirements for taking the lead, and its aptitude provides an individual type in the society of men and a new era in history in which it is first

among all nations today and will be even more so tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.”—NEMZETI UJSAG.

“In one word, the art of modern America may look to a great future. Its development is even more astounding and, apart from the great number of artists of foreign origin it has an excellent staff of artists of purely American antecedents.

These specimens do not even show a trace of those horrid miscarriages of taste smacking of the Soviet which gained ground in Europe. Most of the masters express with a solid technique and with a deep concentration of ideas their artistic feelings and what they have to tell, mostly by means of a character head or of a splendid type or of an effective landscape or seascape.”—PRESTI HIRLAP.

“The art of the United States is just as young, healthy, and realistic as the huge country itself. Though it derives most of its artistic impulse from Europe, its young and marvelously developing culture is not affected by the spiritual crisis of the old continent. America’s art is based on visible reality.

“Both painting and sculpture are under the influence of a conservative and realistic spirit. Their technical ability is impeccable, be it *plain air* impressionism or the result of form and coloring within a studio. Their correctness may serve as an example to our painters who, after giving the outlines of their more interesting and more individual visions, are no longer concerned about the perfect solution of work on a larger scale. This is the difference between Hungarian temperament and American accomplishment.”—BUDAPEST REVIEW.

"The artists who present American art to us in this interesting exhibition are closely united with the aspirations and the sentiments of the community of art to which our best also belong, from which they started and to which they return. In their works we discover beauties which deeply affect us, as they remind us of our good artists and of what is similar in the artistic development of good art in all countries."—PESTER LLOYD.

"The artistic life of America, its production and the appreciation of its works has reached a very high level, especially since the war. Not only its authors, theatres and films often greatly surpass the best in European production; the painters and sculptors, too, have reached the foremost ranks. The new generation of artists of America has not only learned much, especially at Paris, but became organically linked to the exceptionally quick development of American art; they speed along on the old road. It is a real pleasure to walk past their well-balanced works and to drown oneself in the special beauty of their portraits and landscapes."—MAGYARSÁG.

Said Minister Lindskog, opening the American Exhibition at Stockholm, March 15th, 1930.

"I express a strong hope that from the American art which we shall see here, at once both free and rich, free from the sometimes too burdensome traditions, rich in mighty concepts from a proud and independent culture, will come to our own art valuable impulses and enduring profit."

Under the caption "U. S. A. is more highly developed culturally than is generally believed," the critic of the *Dagens Nyheter* writes;

"I am convinced that this exhibition will give an entirely different conception of America from a cultural point of view than that which generally prevails in Europe.

"If we ask ourselves what is the characteristic, distinguishing, and peculiar quality of the American national art, it is not so easy to reply. It is an extremely important question, which Americans have scarcely asked themselves. This exhibition in Stockholm will prove highly interesting, not least because it will answer the question, what is it in reality that gives the individual and national character to American art.

"Now that the hanging of the Exhibition is finished, do we first get an impression of what a really imposing collection of representative art there has been sent from the other side of the Atlantic to Sweden. In America the project has awakened the greatest interest, and it is possible that when the Exhibition closes in Stockholm, representatives from other European countries wishing to borrow the beautiful collection will meet with a favorable response.

"It is a collection that demands time and more time, it is so comprehensive, so varied, so rich in style, in periods, and artistic personality and understanding."

"There can be no doubt that the American exhibition, which opens today with proper solemnity in the Academy of Art, is one of the great events in the art life of Stockholm in recent years. After a first view of the well arranged exhibition one gets a feeling, which I presume he who comes to New York for the first time also gets, a feeling of something new, richly faceted

and bewildering. But an appetite has been awakened and a wish to know all about this thing of which we get an idea, and which is so different from the, for the moment somewhat stagnated, art within our own horizon. We come to a great banquet, become shy and confused before so many strangers, but little by little we joyfully meet acquaintances. (Carl Asplund from *Svenska Dagbladet*.)

In 1933 M. Jonas the Parisian collector declared "American Art has made enormous progress. The world doesn't pay sufficient attention to American artists. In twenty years their art will be as good as ours, if not better." And Prof. Steinhof of Vienna tells us that "America will be the future field for the development of the arts. The American student reveals a simplicity and lucidity which European artists do not have."

"We are advertised by our loving friends," says Shakespeare. Yet how much stronger is the advertisement when we substitute for "loving friends" our natural rivals.

The compiler has merely touched upon a few of many collected opinions from seven European nationalities, enough in this brief survey to prove convincing to those doubting Americans living so close to our native art as to be unable to see it in its just proportions.

APPENDIX II

DISTORTION for design finds its most emphatic appeal and its major justification in certain works of El Greco, for here constructive line is the insistent motive which at once appeals to any observer, layman or professional alike. One is caught in the imperious demand of this emphasis both in the mind and through the hand of this master. He plainly declares "I insist upon this," and we respect his insistence. Though his contemporaries suggest an unbalanced mind and whispers of inebriation were current, the modern attitude is benevolent and we of today may well recall the reply of Lincoln to the defamers of Grant when about to be transferred from a western post to take charge of the army of the Potomac, "If you can find out the brand of liquor Grant uses, let me know, I would like to recommend it to all of my generals."

Here then is a reassertion of the slogan "The King can do no wrong" which has become a comforting and quiescent solution of these questions which largely appeal to sympathy rather than reason.

In Architecture a minor distortion may be observed as applied to the embellishment of the interior, in the

extension of a pilaster into the human form. This is rather extension upward than distortion downward, the flowering forth of humanity from the azoic base, a reminder of the Greek myth of Deucalion.

When pure beauty of line is the evident aim we may condone a desire for more beauty on the part of the artist in a like desire of the singer to hold a note unduly because it is rare. In sculpture therefore the works of Lehmbruck and Archipenko give less offense because the distortion is plainly a prolongation of what is judged to be beauty. It requires but slight effort in discrimination to separate such a motive from a brutalized freedom which assumes unholy control of divine creation.

APPENDIX III

INTELLECTUAL pleasure in Art awaits one through an apprehension of its principles revealed in the work. This becomes an extra dividend to those who base their judgments upon a foundation discoverable in all the arts, for in all, these principles are identical.

See "Art Principles in Practice" by the author.

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